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TWENTY-THREE BOOKS

AND THE STORIES BEHIND THEM

BY

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Preface

IN ORDER that they may not all appear to have been cast in the same mold (even though they were), the following papers are discursive, spotty, desultory, and generally hither-and-yonnish. Stress and accent are consciously askew—thus considerable is said herein of Emerson's platform manner and his addiction to pie, and nothing about his philosophy. One reason for this is that discussions of Emerson's philosophy are available in dozens of convenient places, whereas to get at the pie requires the use of at least a modest pickaxe. For the rest, however, the papers follow an identical pattern. Each presents the circumstances of the publication of a significant, usually a great, English or American book, with some account of its introduction to a transatlantic audience (east or west, as the case may have been), the whole projected against the background of its author. For leave to print, my thanks are due and gladly paid to the proprietors of the *Publishers' Weekly* (specifically to Frederic Melcher and Mildred Smith), in the pages of which these notes first appeared in condensed form.

J. T. W.

Ossining, New York,
November 5, 1938.

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Paradise Lost

THE WORLD may never know "what song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women," despite Sir Thomas Browne's gentle affirmation that these matters "are not beyond all conjecture." But everyone can know what Charles II had for breakfast on the morning of May 25, 1660, on board his own frigate *Swiftsure*, almost in the shadow of the cliffs of Dover, coming home in triumph to an England which he had fled nine years before with the Roundheads at his heels. The meal, shared with the Dukes of York and Gloucester, comprised "nothing else but peas and pork, and boiled beef." There had been "set some ship's diet before them, only to show them the manner of the ship's diet," but the distinguished passengers democratically partook thereof, to the bedazzlement and delight of Samuel Pepys, who, though one of the busiest minor actors in this first Restoration drama, found time to put it all in writing.

Those were great days for Pepys, who enjoyed it all like a picnic, which it pretty much was. When, as the *Swiftsure* lay at Scheveling, news arrived that the King had reached the shore, Pepys assisted in the salute by setting off with his own unpracticed hand "the gun over against my cabin . . . but, holding my head too much over the gun, I had almost spoiled my right eye." When the moment arrived to disembark at Dover, Pepys could hardly expect assignment to the royal barge, but he managed to find a place in a small boat with "Mr. Mansell, and one of the King's footmen, and a dog that the King loved," and "got on shore when the King did," so that he was a privileged witness of the ensuing jubilation and of the mayor's bestowal

of "a very rich Bible," which the unabashable Charles accepted with the reply that "it was the thing that he loved above all things in the world."

Soon thereafter the party set out by coach for London, Pepys and his associates remaining with the fleet. Four days later—May 29, Charles's thirtieth birthday—the most dissolute and most likable of the Stuarts reentered his capital. On the 31st Pepys wrote in his all-embracing diary: "Captain Sparing, of the *Assistance*, brought me a pair of silk stockings of a light blue, which I am much pleased with. This day the month ends. I in very good health, and the world in a merry mood, because of the King's coming."

So much of the world, that is, as dared show its head out of doors. The iron hand of Cromwell had fallen inert in death two years before; the pendulum of affairs had danced erratically for a season, then steadied into a surging swing away from the unsmiling piety of a Puritanism that would not even brook stained-glass windows in its songless churches. But there had been great figures in the eleven years of the Commonwealth, and there had been lesser but not insignificant figures, and even the Latin secretary to the once powerful Council of State perforce fled to the home of a friend in Bartholomew Close on the news that the King was coming into his own again.

One may pity Charles for the suffering he endured on his flight to the Continent—Pepys had the story from his lips and told it graphically under date of May 23—, but the time to pity Charles for ancient trials was over. John Milton's woes were on the increase, and a prodigious total they would make. The loss of the Latin secretaryship meant the abandonment of a comfortable salary (£288 a year—say about \$5000 now); the collapse of the Commonwealth converted into worthless paper a modest fortune in government securities for which the revived monarchy could hardly be expected to assume responsibility, and did not; additional capital had vanished through bad management or the dishonesty of an adviser; he was the father of three motherless daughters, the oldest not yet sixteen;

a second wife had died two years earlier; for nearly eight years—he was fifty-one—he had been totally blind.

§2. The deposed Latin secretary had another trade, but the exigencies of politics had long prevented his working at it. That was the trade of poet, which is no trade at all, as he himself had sung in earlier days. Never was a man who came to maturity with firmer resolution to make the meditation of "the thankless Muse" his life-work—to find virtue in art, and art its own reward. Born in London itself, the son of a cultivated and prosperous scrivener (a sort of glorified notary public), Milton had entered Christ's College, Cambridge, at sixteen, already a well-educated youth, thanks to the devoted supervision of his father. He remained there seven years, emerging with the degree of master of arts, a prodigious knowledge of Latin and Greek literature, a mastery of Hebrew, a sound acquaintance with French and Italian, more than a smattering of Syriac, and no vast respect for his alma mater. In a day when it has been said of Lord Bacon that he knew everything, in the sense that his intellectual equipment embraced all the available comprehension of any subject, it can certainly be said of Milton that he came nearer to encompassing the full cultural circle than did any other mind of his time and country. His father, meanwhile, had retired to Horton in Buckinghamshire, and there Milton passed five years of serenity among his books. During the next two years he was traveling in France and Italy, studying civilization in fullest contemporary flower. Back in London, he became a teacher mainly by the accident of his two nephews' presence in his home, and more for his own enjoyment than from any necessity of making a living at it.

If Milton had died at this point, his biography would be singularly uninteresting. The annals of the poor may be short and simple, but they offer, in general, more of the stuff of drama than do the annals of the well-to-do, particularly of such well-to-do as live in the cloistered ease of study and the fear of God. But if Milton had died at thirty-five he would merit a biography, however dull, for he had written, barring a few significant

exceptions, all of the shorter poems by which his name lives today. From the tranquil Horton era dates *Lycidas*, written to honor the memory of a young Cambridge poet, Edward King, who had been lost in a shipwreck while returning to his home in Ireland, and those famous twin afflictions of the third-year high-school student, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. One learns with satisfaction that there is no such word as *penseroso* in Italian; it should be *pensieroso*, and it means not a contemplative but an anxious man. But things have gone too far—the Italians may as well change their language to conform to the Miltonian conception. Then Henry Lawes, greatest English composer of his day, “the priest of Phoebus’ lyre,” asked Milton to write the words for a mask to be presented by the Earl of Bridgewater (authentic nobleman, not the counterfeit who intrudes into *Huckleberry Finn*), and Milton had produced *Comus*, last and greatest exemplar of its form. And he had already transplanted the sonnet into good English earth, freeing it from the Italian model which even Shakespeare had faithfully copied.

In the summer of 1643 Milton took the step that begins to make his life story externally interesting—the focus of interest in many another biography lies in a similar event—; he married. His bride was Mary Powell, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a too hospitable Oxfordshire gentleman of Cavalier strain who was prevented from ruining himself only because the Puritan Revolution would soon do it for him. It was one of the most ill-sorted marriages of literary history. The management of a wife is a different art altogether from the management of a sonnet, and Mary Powell was of the sort who require more than an average degree of skill in the former accomplishment. A month of a poet’s society was enough for Mary; she returned to Oxfordshire ostensibly on a visit, and she stayed there. Her husband took out his annoyance in writing a tract on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, which went into a second edition quickly enough to indicate that a reasonable percentage of his fellows were in something like Milton’s own case. Two years passed before Mary returned to

his house, obviously at parental instigation, and in the middle of 1646 he had the whole Powell family on his hands. A chastened Mary assumed the full measure of wifely obligations; in six years she bore him four children, sacrificing her own life at twenty-six in giving birth to the last.

Mark Pattison's brief account of Milton in the English Men of Letters Series (a competent and adequate summary, despite the fact that it misquotes the one line in Milton that next to everyone misquotes) calls his life "a drama in three acts;" of which "in the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets." A theatrical producer of our time who has been distinguished for his judgment of the thing that makes the play—Arthur Hopkins—has counseled playwrights to "watch your second act." Act II of the life of John Milton is in the main a study in bathos. Nowhere therein is he the villain—he went through the whole drama with honor unsullied—, but often he plays low comedy unawares. The unhappy story need not be detailed here. It is available *in extenso*, like all the other details of the poet's life, in David Masson's six-volume biography. It is enough to know that Milton's part in the troublous events of the day was momentous enough to effect his flight at the return of Charles. And the dénouement of this second act is an anticlimax. Four months after Charles's return his compromise Parliament passed a bill granting a pardon so general that it included all but a handful of old offenders, of whom Milton was not of sufficiently impressive stature to be one. Even martyrdom was denied him, save the martyrdom of his sight, sacrificed "in Liberty's defense."

§3. Though it was doing rather handsomely in New England, at home English Puritanism was a lost cause—lost and discredited. But its swan song remained to be sung, and sung by John Milton. The idea of an epic presentation of the fall of man, however, had occurred to him at least as early as his thirty-fourth year, while the head of the first Charles still rested

securely on the royal shoulders. His first inclination was toward the lore of the Knights of the Round Table, and one can envisage in dim outline the magnificent tapestry which Milton would have woven from the scarlet and golden threads of Arthurian legend. But in that event might not Tennyson have been driven back upon Genesis, and the world never have had those *Idylls of the King* which are read entire, perhaps, by an unguessable preponderance of men and women over those who have won through the ten thousand lines of *Paradise Lost*?

The title "Paradise Lost" was itself probably evolved before any of the lines—even, indeed, before Milton had determined on the pattern he would adopt. It is certain that he first contemplated casting the theme in the form of a drama, and that he did not abandon this idea until he had weighed it carefully for many years. There is perhaps no parallel, in the history of any literature, of an undertaking of such dimensions more deliberately, purposefully, and unswervingly assumed and prosecuted.

By 1658 he was seriously engaged in the task of composition, and he seems to have completed it by the end of 1663, certainly before 1666. As the curtain of blindness had descended on him long before 1658, it was obviously necessary for him to dictate his copy, and about this necessity a pretty legend, to which great credibility has been lent by the painting by Michael Munkácsy (1878) which now hangs in the New York Public Library, has grown up—a legend of three devoted daughters setting down their father's words, turn and turn about, as the "god-gifted organ voice" sounded the stately harmonies of its lofty theme:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe.

Professor Masson dissipates this tender picture: "His eldest daughter, Anne, could not write; and though the other two could write, and may occasionally, when the poem was in progress, have acted as his amanuenses, their ages exclude the idea of their having been his chief assistants in this capacity—while



AS ACCURATE AS THE CHERRY-TREE STORY
The record does not bear out this touching study of Milton dictating *Paradise Lost* to his daughters. The original painting, by Michael Munkacsy, is in the New York Public Library.

we also know that the poor motherless girls had grown up in circumstances to make them regard the services they were required to perform for their father as less a duty than a trouble." But the situation was not altogether a repetition of the tragedy of Lear and his daughters; Dr. Pattison records that Milton "did not allow his daughters to learn any language, saying with a jibe that one tongue was enough for a woman. They were not sent to any school, but had some sort of teaching at home from a mistress. But in order to make them useful in reading to him, their father was at the pains to train them to read aloud in five or six languages, of none of which they understood one word." And setting down the measured chronicle of "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" must have been almost as exacting and uncongenial a task as reading aloud uncomprehended Hebrew. It is certain that the brunt of the burden of putting the blank-verse periods in writing was borne by male friends.

Before the task was completed Milton married a third time, but there is nothing to indicate that the capable Elizabeth Minshull was ever called upon to neglect her household cares in favor of secretarial duties. In the autumn of 1656 he had married Catherine Woodcock, who died fifteen months later in childbirth, her daughter surviving her barely a month. It was this second wife who inspired Milton's last sonnet:

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from Death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the Old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.
Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear as in no face with more delight.
But oh! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

Milton, be it remembered, had been blind for six years at Catherine's death, and had never seen her, either before or after the wedding—a fact that clarifies the pathetic significance of the sextet. Only to his “fancied” sight could she appear.

Having received the imprimatur of the official licenser of books (who is reputed to have puckered his brow a moment over the statement that occasionally “fear of change perplexes monarchs”), the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* was submitted to Samuel Simmons, bookseller—whether at Simmons's invitation or by Milton's own choice is uncertain. And on April 27, 1667, was drawn up one of the most famous agreements between publisher and author that has ever become available to posterity. By the terms of this agreement, Milton was to receive five pounds down, five pounds when a first edition of thirteen hundred copies had been disposed of “to particular reading customers,” five pounds more with the disposal of a second edition of the same size, and a final five pounds with the sale of a third edition—a total of twenty pounds for thirty-nine hundred copies. Assuming that Barabbas actually was a publisher, then Samuel Simmons has come to be regarded as a close second. But on his behalf it must be pointed out that twenty pounds in that day had the buying power of perhaps sixty (at par) today, and that Simmons was assuming a heavy risk in sponsoring an epic poem. There was, after all, no precedent in English publishing for what he was about to do.

The extent of the risk may be gauged from the fact that Milton did not receive his second five pounds until April 26, 1669. The first edition was entered at Stationers' Hall on August 20, 1667; in other words, more than twenty months was required to dispose of thirteen hundred copies. In the light of this fact Simmons's bargain loses much of its apparent amplitude. And it suffers further diminution when one considers that a second edition did not appear until five years after the first—1674, the year of Milton's death. The third edition, and the last published by Simmons, was issued in 1678. Even if this edition sold off quickly (and all the evidence points to the contrary), still

the maximum sale of *Paradise Lost* must have been fewer than four thousand copies in the first eleven years of its printed existence—a very moderate record for any book.

Simmons soon after this withdrew from the epic business by disposing of his interest in *Paradise Lost* to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds, and in 1683 Aylmer sold half his own interest to Jacob Tonson. Under the tendance of this great publishing genius the poem took on a lease of life that might perhaps have been imparted to it earlier by a more energetic Samuel Simmons. It is not unfitting that the famous engraving of Tonson by William Faithorne depicts him with a copy of *Paradise Lost* in his right hand.

This is the story in barest summary—enough to make it plain that the history of few publishing ventures stands out in clearer and more ample detail than that of *Paradise Lost*. But there is a gap in the chronicle at one important point—bibliographically the most important point of all. The thirteen hundred copies of the first edition appeared with no fewer than eight different varieties of title-page. No other English or American book ever published can offer quite such a wealth of confusion. Happily, the question of precedence seems to have been solved, but the reasons for the variety are still a matter of guesswork.

In the first edition, first title-page, the name of John Milton is printed in large italic capitals. On the second title-page the name is in small italic capitals. On the third title-page the author is designated merely J.M. This is as far as the problem need be carried here. But why J.M.? “May not his [Simmons’s] entering the book at Stationers’ Hall simply as ‘a Poem in Ten Books by J.M.’,” suggests Professor Masson, “have been a caution on his part; and though, in the first issues, he had ventured on the name ‘John Milton’ in full, may he not have found or thought it advisable, for a subsequent circulation in some quarters, to have copies with only the milder ‘J.M.’ upon them?” Charles J. Sawyer and E. J. Harvey Darton’s *English Books 1475–1900: A Signpost for Collectors* (1927), on the other hand, offers the conjecture that the changes were made “presumably

to increase the value or perfection of the book by making it seem like a new edition—a common enough practice, here carried to extremities.” Obviously the full bibliographic story of *Paradise Lost* has not been written. Whether or no it can ever be written is open to question.

§4. The story of the inception of *Paradise Regained* is probably many times more familiar than the pendent epic itself. The details survive in the words of a single but unimpeachable witness—Thomas Ellwood, Quaker, Milton’s junior by thirty-one years, author of half a dozen forgotten tracts, of a “sacred poem,” *Davideis*, and of an autobiography which, first published in 1714, the year following his death, is itself virtually unknown today save for the incidents in it which modestly perpetuate its subject’s connection with his illustrious friend.

Ellwood, in 1665, visited Milton in the Buckinghamshire cottage to which he had fled from plague-smitten London and was handed the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to read at leisure. He duly read it and returned it, whereupon Milton “asked how I liked it, and what I thought of it; which I modestly, but freely, told him; and, after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, ‘Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?’ He made me no answer, but sate some time in a muse, then brake off that discourse and fell upon another subject.

“After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither.

“And when, afterwards, I went to wait on him there (which I seldom failed of doing, whenever my occasions drew me to London), he showed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regained*, and in a pleasant tone said to me, ‘This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of.’ ”

Paradise Regained seems today to have been an inevitable afterthought, the germ of which must have been planted with the very inspiration that produced the longer poem. But it may seem so simply because it does exist. There is no reason to doubt

Ellwood's accuracy of recollection or to impute to him a vanity that would be utterly out of harmony with his character.

Ellwood's story is doubly significant. It indicates that *Paradise Regained* was completed before *Paradise Lost* was published. Possibly Milton withheld the shorter poem himself, unwilling to exhibit too many wares in one package, or eager to see first what reception would be accorded the main epic. Possibly Milton offered it and Samuel Simmons declined it outright or suggested a postponement, which would seem to be good business—if *Paradise Lost* were a failure, Simmons would at least have saved the cost of extra composition, presswork, and paper; if *Paradise Lost* were a success, he could at once issue a salable sequel. Simmons, whether *Paradise Regained* was offered him or not, was evidently none too well pleased with the extremely moderate success of *Paradise Lost*, and did not issue his second edition, already alluded to (this was the first in which the poem was divided into twelve books), until 1674.

Paradise Regained was put in print, however, in 1671, perhaps in Samuel Simmons's despite. The publisher, apparently, was Milton himself, for the imprint read: "Printed by J.M. for John Starkey at the Mitre in Fleetstreet, near Temple Bar"—that very Mitre in which, nearly a century later, James Boswell would play host for the first time to Samuel Johnson. "Printed by" can be interpreted as "printed at the expense of," a practice of the times for which bibliographers have found precedent. Perhaps to swell the bulk of the volume (for *Paradise Regained* occupied only one hundred and twelve of its pages), *Samson Agonistes* was added (giving it two hundred and twenty in all). A second edition did not appear until 1688.

§5. Fear of change was indeed perplexing monarchs when *Paradise Lost* made its first appearance with an American imprint. The year was 1777, and the publisher was Robert Bell of Philadelphia, who seven years earlier had issued Milton's *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Way to Remove Hivelings Out of the Church* under the more colorful but less provocative title of *An Old Looking Glass for the Laity and Clergy*,

which contained also a brief sketch of the poet. This forgotten exercise in ecclesiastical polemics was Milton's introduction to the New World. The 1777 venture was a much more impressive performance. The first of the two volumes contained eleven of the twelve books of *Paradise Lost*; the twelfth book was carried over into the second volume, which contained, in addition, *Paradise Regained* and the shorter poems, together with the memoir by Dr. Thomas Newton which had become a standard short biography upon its original London appearance in 1749. Dr. Newton had received six hundred and thirty pounds for editing *Paradise Lost* and one hundred and thirty-five pounds for *Paradise Regained*—strong practical evidence of the prestige which Milton's fame accumulated within three-quarters of a century of his death.

Robert Bell was a native of Glasgow, and emigrated to America about 1766, when he was thirty-two years old. Setting up in Philadelphia as bookseller and auctioneer, he prospered as befitted his industry, shrewdness, and wit. As early as 1770 he had added publishing to his other activities, and was solidly established in the field when he issued the first American edition of *Paradise Lost* from his Third Street shop. A clerk who was for a little time in his employ established a more assured claim to immortality than his picturesque employer. The clerk was Thomas Paine, and the employer lent his fame superb impetus in 1776 by publishing his *Common Sense*. The robust art of pamphleteering did not die with John Milton.

Gray's Elegy

WATERLOO, declared an alumnus who spoke with the voice of unimpeachable authority, was won on the playing fields of Eton; but Waterloo was almost a century in the future when Orozmades, Almanzor, Favonius, and Celadon (who, if they had been asked to recall a great victory of English arms over French, would have named Blenheim) entered the school. Orozmades, surveying his Eton days from the somber maturity of twenty-six years, would later declare that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," a statement not so universally associated with the school as is the Wellingtonian apothegm. The "distant prospect of Eton College" which was to inspire this utterance was not vastly distant either in time or space. Orozmades enjoyed the prospect, and distilled from it the exquisite and stately melancholy of the resulting *Ode*, soon after he had come to Stoke Poges, a tiny hamlet four miles distant whose name he was to emblazon with a luster that few communities of anything like its size have won save, like Waterloo and Blenheim, by the tragic accident of battle.

Orozmades, Almanzor, Favonius, and Celadon were names with an authoritative Elizabethan expansiveness about them which faded utterly when correlated with the designations which appeared on four parish registers. These were, respectively, Thomas Gray, Thomas Ashton, Richard West, and Horatio (better Horace, worse Horry) Walpole. Ashton's career is of negligible interest save to the more intensive student of the career of Walpole. West, true poet and true friend, died untimely. Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* and the best letters of his long day—he died at eighty, less than a week before

John Adams assumed the Presidency of the United States. Gray wrote little, judged by the average writer's output from Chaucer to Galsworthy, but a greater proportion of that little survives in the heart and mind of the common man than of Milton or Pope or Shakespeare—than of the English Bible itself.

Gray was a Londoner to the extent that he was born in London. He entered Eton when he was about ten years old; Walpole took his precocity on the same journey at the same age and about the same time. Almost together they went to Cambridge seven years later; together, five years later still, they toured the Continent at Walpole's expense. They set out in March, 1739; they explored France and Italy in detail, and at Reggio, in April, 1741, they fell out. Travel with your best friend if you would tire of him—this seems to be the logical explanation of a breach which, whatever caused it (and every biographer of either Gray or Walpole has had his guess), was not healed until late in 1745.

Gray returned from Italy to find his father dying of the gout. The elder's passing left mother and son in approximate poverty. Late in 1742 they went to Stoke Poges to live with Mrs. Gray's widowed sister, Anna Rogers, and an unmarried sister, Mary Antrobus, and from this period dates the ode on Eton College. From this period, too, dates almost certainly the inception, probably the first tentative draft, of something of vaster moment than the Eton ode.

The son and nephew was quick to note that the slender income available for the support of the aging ladies who, with himself, comprised the Stoke Poges household became awkwardly tenuous when stretched to cover four lives instead of three. Forthwith, in manly fashion, he returned to Cambridge, ostensibly (to spare the ladies' feelings) to study law, actually to ease the burden in West End House, and with Cambridge, save for a London interval of three years, his name is associated to the day of his death in 1771. Of outward excitement, in that long period, his life provides few incidents capable of firing the most combustible imagination. He never left England after



GRAY'S TOMB IN STOKE POGES CHURCHYARD

From the engraving by Pollard after the drawing by Sandby. The resting-place of the poet's mother, nearby, bears an epitaph of his composition.

the hegira with Walpole; he rarely left Cambridge save to spend his vacations at Stoke Poges; he never married.

In November, 1749, Gray's Aunt Mary Antrobus died. The event is of lasting note because it probably provided the impetus that caused him to resume work on the verses he had begun at Stoke Poges seven years before. He toiled to good purpose; the composition was completed at Stoke Poges the following June. For on the twelfth of that month he wrote Walpole a letter enclosing a finished draft: "Having put an end to a thing whose beginning you have seen long ago, I immediately send it to you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it: a merit that most of my writings have wanted and are like to want."

Horace Walpole, therefore, was the first person after the author (almost certainly not excepting the surviving aunt and the mother) to read *An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard*. It pleased Walpole immensely—pleased him to the point of enthusiastic indiscretion. For quite without Gray's permission (which might or might not have been forthcoming had it been requested) Walpole had several manuscript copies of the verses made for distribution among his friends.

It would not be until seven years later that Walpole "erected a printing-press at my house at Strawberry Hill"—the Twickenham estate to which he had removed a few days before Gray sent him the manuscript of the *Elegy*—and the first production of this indubitably private press would be Gray's *Odes*. The *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* had already been published in 1747, five years after its composition, thanks to the good offices of Walpole. It bore the imprint of Robert Dodsley, who had risen from a footman on the way to becoming, before the end of his career, the leading publisher of his time. Under his sponsorship were issued books by Pope, Goldsmith, Sterne, and Johnson. His first experience with Gray, however, was a flat failure. No one was interested in the anonymous sixpenny pamphlet. Where, one wonders, was the old Eton spirit?

§2. Gray meanwhile remained in utter ignorance of the ap-

proval which his *Elegy* was winning in its journeys from hand to hand. His complacency was shattered in February, 1751, by the receipt of a letter from the *Magazine of Magazines* announcing that the editors were in possession of a copy of "an ingenious poem, called 'Reflections in a Country Churchyard,'" which they begged leave to print—rather, which they were going to print, leave or no. Gray was naturally indignant and vented his wrath, quite logically, on Horace Walpole. Walpole had got him into this mess; Walpole must get him out. And Gray saw a way out.

"As I am not at all disposed," he wrote on February 11, "to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and therefore am obliged to desire you make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be,—*Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard*. If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you hold the *Magazine of Magazines* in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone."

The race that followed must have been one of the most exciting in the history of bookmaking. Walpole had been sadly at fault, but he assuredly made up for his lapse in a magnificent burst of activity that saw the *Elegy* published as a quarto pamphlet with a prefatory note (unsigned) by Walpole himself "in less than a week's time"—four days, in fact, after Gray had first learned of the officious intentions of the proprietors of the *Magazine of Magazines*.

But these same proprietors were not asleep. Somehow, news

of what was going on reached their ears—evidence is provided in the fact that while the magazine was regularly issued during the closing days of the month, in this instance it was issued on the 16th, as disclosed, apparently for the first time, by Ralph Straus in his biography of Dodsley (1910). But the 26th would have done just as well—Dodsley had won by a day.

But he had won at some expense of accuracy of text—very little expense, considering. His misprints, unhappily, were of the sort which are not immediately recognized as misprints. In the third stanza he misread “secret bower” as “sacred bower,” though the owl, the bower’s tenant, is revered in no recorded system of theology. But as the phrase “sacred bower” made a sort of sense (one is reminded of the fabled confusion of battle-scared, bottle-scared, and battle-scarred) it managed to persist in some later editions. “Some kindred spirit” was metamorphosed into “some hidden spirit,” which also made a sort of sense. And “smiling as in scorn” became “frowning as in scorn”—here, undoubtedly, the Dodsley shop assumed the editorial function. The *Magazine of Magazines*, however, outdid all of these errata. It declared that “their harrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke,” which made excellent sense, regardless of one’s choice of subject and object, but Gray had written “furrow” instead of “harrow.” And it contrived equally good sense in rendering “read their history in a nation’s eyes” as “read their destiny in a nation’s eyes.” It made meaningless the description of “some frail memorial . . . With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpturc decked” by substituting “culture” for “sculpture.” “Church-way pass” for Gray’s “church-way path” was a less immediately recognizable error. The March issue of the *Magazine of Magazines* listed the pamphlet edition among the new books and had the effrontery to state that the Dodsley issue had been “printed from a very imperfect copy,” Mr. Straus records, “though a correct one had appeared in its own columns.”

Two grammatical errors, however—one a singular verb with a plural subject, the other a plural verb with a singular sub-

ject—, appeared in the original version and have never since been corrected. They occur in the stanzas beginning "Perhaps in this neglected spot" and "Their name, their years." The curious student is invited to seek them out, and in the seeking let him pay the tribute of a moment's consideration to the memory of the Reverend John Mitford, who seems to have been the first to call attention to them, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1836.

§3. However vexed Gray may have been at Walpole's well-meant precipitancy in spreading manuscript copies of the *Elegy* broadcast, he was delighted at the success of his own suggested amends. "You have indeed conducted with great decency my little misfortune," he wrote, apparently on receipt of the pamphlet. "Nurse Dodsley has given it a pinch or two in the cradle, that I doubt it will bear the marks of as long as it lives." In a subsequent letter he lists the errata and adds: "I do not expect any more editions."

Gray's expectations were disappointed. One gains the impression, probably an accurate one, that Gray, in the words of an unwilling prospect desperately trying to rid himself of an unwelcome salesman, was "not interested." But interest must have been aroused by the instantaneous and continuing success of the *Elegy*. At any rate, Gray later wrote a bibliographical note that certainly indicates more than a passing concern in the fate of the poem: "Published in Febr'y., 1751, by Dodsley, & went thro four editions, in two months; and afterwards a fifth, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th & 11th, printed also in 1753 with Mr. Bentley's Designs, of wch there is a 2d edition, & again by Dodsley in his Miscellany, vol. 4th & in a Scotch Collection call'd the Union: translated into Latin by Chr: Anstey, Esq., and Revd. Mr. Roberts, & published in 1762, & again in the same year by Rob: Lloyd, M.A." These two Latin translations were only the beginning voices of a flattering chorus. For before the middle of the nineteenth century the *Elegy* had appeared in eleven Latin, seven Greek, thirteen Italian, fifteen French, and six German versions.

As Gray had requested, Dodsley issued the pamphlet "without my name." The editors of the *Magazine of Magazines*, however, had been bound by no such instructions. They declared the poem to be the work of "the very ingenious Mr. Gray" of Peterhouse College. The authorship, therefore, was hardly a secret from the very start of the *Elegy's* career.

Dodsley titled the poem *An Elegy Wrote in a Country Church Yard*, as everyone recalls who has ever seen, in the original or in reproduction, the striking title-page of his quarto pamphlet, with its stark assortment of skulls, crossbones, and gravedigger's tools. "Wrote" for "written" appeared only in the first edition. In a day when the preterite was often substituted for the past participle this was nothing to get excited about.

Gray was an ideal author from a publisher's point of view. For, says Sir Edmund Gosse, he "held a Quixotic notion that it was beneath a gentleman to take money for his inventions from a bookseller, a view in which Dodsley warmly coincided." The first John Murray told Gray's biographer, William Mason, that Dodsley "was known to have made nearly a thousand pounds by the poetry of Gray."

The impression has persisted, ever since the middle of the eighteenth century, that some of the *Elegy* at least was composed in Stoke Poges churchyard itself. It has been easy to accept the literalness of "written in a country church yard." It is romantic to picture a sad man seated on a conveniently flat tombstone busying himself with a quill pen. But this very assumption is, perhaps, one of the most striking tributes to the artistic and emotional sincerity of the *Elegy*. And this consideration is quite apart from the universal quotability of the poem—a factor that undoubtedly mars it in the eyes of the present-day reader, but a state of affairs for which neither the reader nor Thomas Gray is responsible. So ineradicably familiar are the clichés of the *Elegy* that in rereading it one is conscious of a sort of posthumous plagiarism, as though the spirit of the author had returned to earth to patch the creation of his antique genius with the mortar of Bartlett. The intellectual

shock is identical with that which the casual reader of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* experiences, who, coming on Mark Antony's oration in its proper place, feels that, with all respect to the author, he has suddenly been confronted with an interpolation from a high-school text.

The *Elegy* is perhaps the most commonly cited item whenever a primer discussion of rare-book prices is conducted. This importance it owes to the simple fact that it began its career at a purchase price of sixpence—the Gutenberg Bible, the First Folio Shakespeare, Johnson's *Dictionary*, even Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* each cost originally a princely sum on publication, by comparison.

The first edition of the *Elegy*, moreover, presents a curious and confusing bibliographical point which may never be resolved to everybody's satisfaction, and which does not seem to be of tremendous importance anyway. The *F* in the word FINIS at the end of the text has penetrated the paper in some copies and is cleanly printed in others. Which copies came first? Did the *F* work awry in the middle of the printing and damage the succeeding sheets, which would make copies with perfect *F*'s the earliest issue, or was the *F* faultily inserted in the first place, the damage detected and the *F* set straight, making the scarred copies the earliest issue? You pay your money and you take your choice. But, the *Elegy* being the *Elegy*, you pay your money anyway.

§4. The weeping willow was the familiar arboreal spirit of the eighteenth century, and the Romantic movement was born to the accompaniment of tears. Robert Blair wrote a long blank-verse poem called *The Grave* which, first published in 1743, won fame slowly, but soared finally in an assured crescendo that had its high point in the famous edition of 1808 with twelve plates after William Blake. During the preceding half-century Blair and Gray had come to be regarded as a favorite poetical team, although there were those who scoffed at Blair—and with some warrant, for, according to S. Austin Allibone's monumental *Critical Dictionary of English Literature*,

"a poet who endeavors to insinuate droll satirical sketches, at the expense of physicians and undertakers, into a gallery of sublime representations of the sable hearse, the funeral cortège, and the gloomy aisles of the city of the dead, cannot hope to escape satire himself."

Thus it fell out that when the seventh edition of *The Grave* crossed the Atlantic in 1772, the year after Gray's death, it carried the *Elegy* along with it, both poems making a conjoint first American appearance with the Boston imprint of John Boyles, "for James Foster Condry. Opposite the Cornfield in Union-Street." *The Grave* occupies thirty-five pages of this scarce pamphlet issue, with page thirty-eight blank and the *Elegy* extending from page thirty-nine to page forty-five. Robert Aitken brought out the two poems in Philadelphia the following year, nine years before he issued the first Bible in English to be printed in the New World.

Keats's Poems

EDMUND PEARSON, in his fascinating researches in the lore of murder, had frequent occasion to lift a finger of justifiable scorn at the Mysterious Female Witness. No capital trial is really capital without one. There are classic examples, as anyone familiar with certain causes célèbres of American criminal history will readily recall—and the national qualifier can be dropped without impairing the value of the statement.

For a critical appraisal of the attributes of the Mysterious Female Witness the reader is referred to Mr. Pearson's own engrossing recitals. Suffice it, for present purposes, to note that among these attributes are a lively imagination and a supreme wisdom after the event—characteristics, be it allowed, not invariably reserved by Providence to a single sex. Nor does the testimony of the Mysterious Female Witness become matter of record only after the formal administration of the oath. Consider for example Mrs. Gratty, of Craven Street, Finsbury—which thoroughfare is not to be confused with that Craven Street, Strand, where Benjamin Franklin, once a poor printer's boy but now the messenger and London agent for the American colonies, found satisfactory lodgings in 1757.

Mrs. Gratty's *floruit* fell some half-century later, and she is memorable because she knew John, George, and Thomas Keats, and because, learning in later years that John had turned poet, she recalled that "when he could only just speak, he had a habit of ignoring questions asked him and instead would make a rhyme to the last word spoken by the questioner." Thus Amy Lowell in her classic and voluminous study of John Keats, crediting the incident to Benjamin Robert Haydon, who had it

from George Keats, who had it from Mrs. Gratty herself. Miss Lowell bluntly stated that she did not believe a word of it, and perhaps no one ever did except Mrs. Gratty. Young John Keats, in all likelihood, was simply exhibiting a common phenomenon of middle infancy—repeating, or trying to repeat, the last sound to reach his ears and stumbling over the consonants. Certainly, unlike Alexander Pope, he never asserted for his own account any indications of precocity.

And, just as certainly, there was nothing in the family strain to forecast the imminence of a poet. John Keats's father was a hostler—not, to be sure, a mere straw-flecked toiler with horses, but a stable foreman who heeded latter-day advice and married the boss's daughter. Little is known of the antecedents of either the father or the mother, but antecedents and parents alike doubtless belonged to that vast company of the moderately poor but moderately respectable who make up the most crowded battalions in the army of universal ancestry. When John Keats was in his ninth year—that is, in April, 1804—his father died as the result of a fall from a horse. A year or so later the mother took a second husband, only to learn that if marriage is a gamble the odds are about even, for soon afterward she went the familiar road home to mother.

Her father, the stable proprietor, himself recently dead, had left his widow, daughter, and grandchildren intelligently and decently provided for. With the death of his mother in 1810, John Keats was apprenticed to an Edmonton surgeon for five years, and remained four. Unfortunately, little is known of this episode in his career. It is known, on his own evidence, that Keats once brandished a fist in the surgeon's face—his name was Thomas Hammond—, but this is a rather sketchy emotional relic from which to reconstruct either Mr. Hammond's character, or his ability as a practitioner, or his worth as a tutor. Keats, indeed, despite the fact that almost anyone would include gentle among a group of half a dozen adjectives characterizing him, was in his boyhood considerable of a spitfire. A school-fellow, Edward Holmes, records that "his penchant was for

fighting. He would fight anyone—morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him."

Toward the end of 1814 Keats returned to London to continue the study of medicine at St. Thomas's and Guy's hospitals, but a few months in lecture and operating rooms convinced him that he would rather be a poet. "The other day, during the lecture," he told a friend, Cowden Clarke, shortly before he reached his momentous decision, "there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland." One wonders what the lecture was about, and how much of it remained with the student. And again: "My last operation was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety, but reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again."

§2. The decision to be a poet was no whim of the moment. It had had its birth, perhaps, at the dawn of manhood. For, contrary to the enthusiastic testimony of Mrs. Gratty, there is no evidence that Keats composed a single line of poetry before 1812 or 1813—when he was sixteen or seventeen—, so that the "Imitation of Spenser" was produced, if not by Mr. Hammond's inspiration, quite possibly on Mr. Hammond's time. At the period when Keats abandoned medicine altogether, the bulk of his compositions had grown to rather large proportions. He had become friendly with men of letters, chief among them Leigh Hunt. Hunt was Keats's senior by eleven years; had they grown up together as contemporaries, Hunt rather than Keats would have been selected in early years as the more likely genius of the pair. As a boy Hunt was sensitive and self-conscious, preferring walks in wood and field to the rough and tumble of the playground. He began to write poetry at twelve, and in 1801 his enthusiastic father gathered his compositions into a book, *Juvenilia*, which went through four editions in three years—probably a record for a parentally sponsored production. Seven years later Leigh Hunt and his brother John

inaugurated the *Examiner*, whose attacks on the Prince Regent culminated, in 1812, in the arrest and imprisonment of the Hunts on a charge of libel. The imprisonment was not a severe physical ordeal—the Hunts' lot, in fact, was no more uncomfortable than that of an obstreperous army officer confined to quarters, and pretty good quarters. The royal spanking was over in 1815.

It was sometime in the following year that Cowden Clarke, whose father, John Clarke, had conducted the school at Enfield, near Edmonton, which Keats attended as a boy, took to Hunt's home at Hampstead a few manuscript samples of his school-mate's verses. Hunt was impressed, so much so that even before he had ever set eyes on Keats he had published in the *Examiner* (for May 5, 1816) his sonnet "To Solitude." Not quite three months later Keats received his "certificate to practise as an apothecary in the country"—and never practiced, which was probably just as well for people who had to have things done to their temporal arteries.

Soon thereafter—exactly when, it is impossible to say—he met Hunt. Their progress into friendship was rapid; Hunt's conviction that his walking-mate was a poet in the making (and very nearly made) kept pace with the growth of their friendship. By October of that year Keats was mentioning the Olliers in a letter, from which Miss Lowell deduced, with undoubted accuracy, that he was already projecting a book of poems, probably at Hunt's instigation. Keats was twenty-one years old, almost to the minute—an old man to be publishing a book compared to Leigh Hunt himself, compared also to one Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had been put out of Oxford a few years earlier for an atheistic pamphlet, had published two or three things in the interval, and would a few months later himself be on the Olliers' list, not vastly to their profit.

The Olliers were Charles and James, brothers. James's was the business and executive head, Charles's the editorial judgment. Charles had abandoned banking for theatrical criticism a few years earlier, and had then gone into publishing. He had

long been one of Hunt's most intimate friends, and remained so until his death in 1859 only three months before Hunt's. It is impossible to say whether it required much persuasion on Hunt's part to commit the Olliers to Keats's book. Probably it did not; Hunt's recommendation meant much, the element of friendship aside, and Charles Ollier doubtless had his own high opinion of the manuscript. Yet a first book of poems, even by a poet destined to unequivocal immortality, is an insecure investment—fame carries no headlight.

Early in 1817 Keats was reading proof for his book; in February it was ready for the binder. There is a familiar story, well authenticated so far as the bare physical facts are concerned, that Keats wrote out the dedicatory sonnet to Leigh Hunt while the printer's boy was waiting for the copy. This need not mean that it was composed on the spot—Miss Lowell surmises otherwise, in her life of the poet.

Poems, by John Keats, with a two-line quotation from Spenser and a profile bust of Shakespeare (used in default of a bust of Spenser, presumably) on the title-page, appeared in March, 1817. Thereupon, as Miss Lowell puts it with succinct accuracy, "nothing happened." The new book, Clarke wrote, "might have emerged in Timbuctoo with far stronger chance of fame and approbation." The *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* withheld their fire. The *Monthly Review* for April had a bit of pleasant comment, and that was about all. The Olliers were so grievously disappointed that on April 29 they wrote to George Keats, who seems to have taken them to task for the failure of his older brother's book to become a good seller, a letter that has become famous in the history of publishing. "We regret," it began, "that your brother ever requested us to publish his book."

The exchange of correspondence exhibits a rather unreasonable degree of impatience and bad temper on both sides (John Keats himself was not involved, being on the Isle of Wight at the moment). It is not likely that many more copies would have been disposed of in a year's time, but George Keats, in all fairness, might have given the Olliers more than sixty days, and

the Olliers, in equal fairness, might have given themselves more than sixty days before announcing "the unpleasant necessity of declining any further connection" with the book. "Publish in haste and repent immediately" seems to have been the Ollier motto.

John Keats meantime was roving over a good deal of England and putting into shape a much more ambitious enterprise than the scattered contents of the *Poems*. This was *Endymion*, a "poetic romance," which Taylor and Hessey had agreed to publish, and on which they had even paid him an advance. John Taylor and James Augustus Hessey were ambitious men in their thirties with sound heads on their shoulders. They not only published books but also conducted a bookstore, and they sold not only new books but old ones as well. Somewhat later they established the *London Magazine*, so intimately associated with the name of Lamb. Thus their business became one of the most all-inclusive publishing enterprises ever recorded—they did practically everything except operate a newspaper. And they were successful.

Endymion appeared in the spring of 1818, and *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* prepared to strike. These famous and bitter attacks on Keats were really by-products of the periodicals' animus against Hunt, but as the fame of Keats has far surpassed that of Hunt, they are read now rather as indictments of the younger man. The full distillation of their venom was not exuded until after Keats's death, and it is permissible here to anticipate this event and quote a famous sample of their notice of Shelley's *Adonais*:

"A Mr. John Keats, a young man who had left a decent calling for the melancholy trade of Cockney-poetry, has lately died of a consumption, after having written two or three little books of verses, much neglected by the public. His vanity was probably wrung not less than his purse; for he had it upon the authority of the Cockney Homers and Virgils, that he might become a light to their region at a future time. But all this is not necessary to help a consumption to the death of a poor

sedentary man, with an unhealthy aspect, and a mind harassed by the first troubles of versemaking. The New School, however, will have it that he was slaughtered by a criticism of the *Quarterly Review*.—"O flesh, how art thou fishified!"

The authorship of this vicious and filthy onslaught is still matter for conjecture, but it is almost certain that several persons had a hand in it, and enough circumstantial evidence can be adduced to satisfy any jury that John Gibson Lockhart, son-in-law and biographer-to-be of Sir Walter Scott, had a major part in it.

Keats was hurt by the attacks on *Endymion*, but withstood the crude assaults with better grace and manliness than many a more meagerly endowed spirit would have done. One of Keats's admirable qualities was his balance, his poise, the normality of his character. His genius was so abundant that no room was left for temperament—a quality frequently assumed to compensate for an insufficiency of talent.

§3. Two years elapsed before the appearance of another book by Keats, and to this interval belongs the incident of his meeting with Fanny Brawne and the ripening of a love that endured to the death. Doubts have been expressed whether Miss Brawne reciprocated the sentiment, and sundry sponsors of these doubts have been quite indignant about it—the idea of an ordinary young Englishwoman who had the opportunity not falling in love with John Keats! But these posthumous matchmakers can be content—Miss Lowell's researches convinced her that Fanny Brawne was devoted to Keats.

Early in July, 1820, there appeared, over the imprint of Taylor and Hessey, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. It was well received—even the *Edinburgh* had a kind word—and "has a moderate sale," Keats wrote. Keats's health, meanwhile, had been steadily declining. His mother had died of consumption, and the same doom was already ordained for him. Physicians told him not to risk another winter in England; on September 18 he sailed for Italy. It was too late; he grew worse steadily, and on February 23, 1821, he died in

Rome. He had passed his twenty-fifth birthday the preceding fall at Naples. Four days later he was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. A year later the ashes of Shelley found harborage in the same resting place. Shelley's body had been recovered from the Bay of Spezzia a few days earlier, identification being made possible by two books which he carried in his pockets. One was a copy of Sophocles, the other a *Lamia* doubled back at "The Eve of St. Agnes."

No epitaph is better known than that which is cut in the tombstone of John Keats: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Its familiarity has somewhat exaggerated its importance. One pictures Keats uttering the words as a final despairing cry, and insisting, by a perversion of pride, that their hopeless import be set on his stone. The facts, unfortunately for one's sense of the dramatic, hardly admit of this interpretation. Shortly before Keats's death, and at a time when its close approach was so certain that all concerned could discuss it openly, Joseph Severn, who had accompanied him to Italy and was with him to the last, described to him the beauties of the cemetery in which his body was to lie. "It seems to have been gently and without bitterness," records Sir Sidney Colvin in his study of Keats, describing this interview, "that he gave for his epitaph the words, partly taken from a phrase in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Philaster,'—'here lies one whose name was writ in water.'" Later, when Severn and Keats's friend Charles Brown set up the stone over his grave, Brown, Colvin believes, "let the wish expressed by Keats [regarding the epitaph] stand for him as an absolute command." As a consequence, the casual, half-humorous characterization has survived carrying all the weight of a carefully formulated pronouncement of self-depreciation. Of far greater significance is the more considered, only less familiar, and accurate self-appraisal: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death"

§4. Twelve years after the original publication of *Lamia* and eleven after the death of Keats, the house of Grigg & Elliot of Philadelphia brought out a fat and incredibly ugly octavo vol-

ume comprising *The Poetical Works of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats*. Of this Gargantuan compilation of six hundred and seven pages of text Keats occupied the modest allotment of seventy-five pages. But the book was no fatter, no uglier, no more Gargantuan than its ungainly forebear—a compendium of the same three poets, set also in forbidding double columns, which the Galignani bookshop of Paris (which still flourishes) had issued in 1829. This Paris edition was the first collected edition of Keats's poems to be issued anywhere, and the Philadelphia edition of 1832 itself anticipated the first collected London edition by eight years.

The first American edition of Keats in which he appeared unsupported by any of his contemporaries, however illustrious, was issued at New York in 1846 as a unit in Wiley and Putnam's "Library of Choice Reading." This designation was employed by the firm for those titles which could not be used in their "Library of American Books" without naturalizing several English authors, but, the issue of nationality aside, the two collections were one in the high percentage of durability and in the notable degree of editorial acumen which they evidenced. The following year, for example, there appeared in the "Library of Choice Reading" the first American edition of Izaak Walton's *The Complete Angler*, not quite two full centuries after the original London edition. And the "Library of American Books" included among its earliest titles the first appearances of such native works of destiny as Numbers II, VIII, XIII–XIV, and XVII–XVIII—which were, respectively, Poe's *Tales*, Poe's *Raven*, Melville's *Typee*, and Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

This first separate American edition of Keats appears in two bindings. The logical first binding identifies the book on the backstrip as "Keat's Poems," the second as "Keats's Poems."

A collection of the first editions of Keats, even including the American editions, requires a minimum of shelf-room, with a compensating maximum of expenditure if one would have the original London editions in boards uncut. It is worth noting,

in this connection, that Taylor and Hessey toyed with the idea of issuing the contents of *Lamia* as a group of pamphlets. Fortunately, nothing came of the idea. A *Lamia* in parts! Life is already as tortuous and confused an enterprise as one would well care to have it.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK in the morning of Tuesday, July 7, 1896, Charles Thomas Wooldridge, thirty years old, late trooper in the Royal Horse Guards, mounted the scaffold in the prison yard at Reading, Berkshire, and "without a struggle and without a word" expiated the murder of his twenty-three-year-old wife. Justice had moved with British expedition: the crime had been committed exactly one hundred days before.

Whatever the thoughts that thronged Wooldridge's brain on the brief march from cell to gallows, with the tenor bell of St. Lawrence's Church tolling the seconds that divided him from eternity, certainly Fate vouchsafed him no hint that one of the great English poems of his or any age would one day be dedicated to his memory. Under the circumstances, foreknowledge of this fact might have been a dispensable boon. Possibly, too, the tenant of the third cell on the third landing of Gallery C, listening with his tense fellows for the stroke of the bell (not the tenor bell of St. Lawrence's) that would herald the passing of a soul, would have been as happy to forego the experience, destined though it was to provide the emotional crucible in which the finest metal of his immortality would be fired. Hangings were infrequent at Reading; Wooldridge's was the fourth (including a double execution) in eighteen years. Mathematically, therefore, the chances were against the average inmate's being compelled to undergo the vicarious torture of waiting for the spring of the trap.

C.3.3. had been in Reading only a few months, following his transfer from Wandsworth Prison, when the execution took place. He had been sentenced on May 25, 1895, to two years'

hard labor for a crime against nature. His prison designation was ironic in its brevity, for he had been christened Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde in his native city of Dublin thirty-nine years before. His father was a roistering but far from incompetent surgeon, his mother an eccentric poetess who dressed freakishly and who, as the inexorable years exacted their toll, attempted to sustain the illusion of youthful beauty by receiving guests in a darkened room. It was a murky pedigree, and it explains much of the darker, some of the brighter side of the character and genius of Sir William and Lady Wilde's second son, whose sex was such an annoyance to his mother that she fostered the pretense, even in his dress, that he was a girl. A daughter, Isola, born three years after Oscar, died when she was eight years old—her memory would one day inspire as tender a lament as ever exemplified brotherly devotion, the lovely and simple "Requiescat."

At seventeen Oscar Wilde entered Trinity College, Dublin, and three years later he won the Gold Medal for Greek provided from a fund left by Bishop Berkeley, he of no-matterness and tar-water. The medal, despite the great Bishop's metaphysics, proved sufficiently material to become pawnable in a moment of economic stress—and such moments dogged Wilde until he died "beyond his means." Soon after winning the medal he applied for a scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford, and was awarded a demyship of ninety-five pounds a year (not bad for those pre-Rhodesian days), "inclusive of all allowances," to run for five years. Thus substantially endowed, he crossed to England.

The great event of Wilde's Oxford career, so far as his after fame is concerned, was his winning of the Newdigate poetry prize in the spring of 1878. His poem, *Ravenna*, printed in pamphlet form soon afterward, thus became his first book. It is not exceedingly rare (Wilde himself appears to have taken up about two hundred copies), but the collector must beware of a pirated near-facsimile issued twenty-six years later, which can readily be detected by its omission of the arms of Oxford from

the cover. *Ravenna* netted Wilde a cash award of twenty-one pounds; and furthermore, a fine of forty-five pounds which had been levied against him earlier was remitted.

The Wilde of legend begins with his arrival in London at the conclusion of his Oxford career. Velvet coat, knee breeches (which probably became Wilde better than they have sundry American ambassadors to the Court of St. James's), the omnipresent cigarette (in a day when this commodity was held to emerge from "the music box that plays only one tune: 'Nearer, my God, to thee'"), the silken shirt, the long hair, the flower in the "medieval hand"—all these made of Wilde a marked man, as he intended they should. Public, press, and *Punch* rose to the bait beautifully. "Aesthetic" became the catchword of the times, just as "normalcy" did in America in the dear dead past of 1920. William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, their great partnership not ten years old, and neither of them yet Sirs, helped the good work along with *Patience*. No wonder at all that when *Poems by Oscar Wilde* appeared with the imprint of David Bogue in the summer of 1881 it speedily went through five English editions and two in Boston.

Curiosity about Wilde in America exceeded the sale of his *Poems*—not everyone was reading "The Garden of Eros" or "The Burden of Itys," but everyone knew about the knee breeches and the sunflower. It was a sartorial era—the best-dressed President in American history was in the White House, and Sockless Jerry Simpson had not yet come to Congress. New York turned out to meet Wilde; so did Boston, including a platoon of Harvard students who marched down to their front seats costumed à la Wilde. But Wilde was forewarned, psychologically if not actually, for he wore simple evening dress. Numerous other attempts to heckle him were made wherever he went, but he always scored—whatever his faults, Oscar Wilde was the best of all possible sports.

§2. From America Wilde went to Paris, remaining until his funds were exhausted, when he returned to England and lecturing. In the spring of 1884 he married, took a house in Chel-

sea, and entrusted the decoration of it to James Abbott McNeill Whistler. He continued to lecture, did some writing, and became editor of the *Woman's World*. The incongruity of this connection is more apparent at this distance than it was real at the time; Wilde was a competent editor, and the early discontinuance of the *Woman's World* was due to no fault of his. His name began to appear more frequently on the title-pages of books—*The Happy Prince and Other Tales* in 1888, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The House of Pomegranates*, *Intentions*, and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* in 1891.

On February 20, 1892, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, subtitled "A Play About a Good Woman," was produced at the St. James's Theatre and ran for more than five months before its departure for the provinces. Wilde had found a form of self-expression on which his fame would rest even if the Reading episode had never occurred. In 1894 came *A Woman of No Importance*, and in 1895 *An Ideal Husband* and his masterpiece of farce, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Meanwhile there had been a buzz of gossip about Wilde which finally goaded him into bringing a suit for libel against the Marquis of Queensbury. The Marquis's name and fame survive impressively in circles wherein the name of Jimmy Wilde is better known than that of Oscar, for every properly conducted boxing bout is governed by rules formulated by this same Marquis of Queensbury. Obviously he was a redoubtable antagonist—as Wilde learned to his cost. As Nathan Haskell Dole summarizes the action: "Oscar Wilde drove down to the old Bailey in a brougham with servants in livery. He almost won his case. He made a fatal admission. The Marquis was acquitted. Wilde was privately advised to leave the country. He was either too insane or too proud to take advantage of the delay in effecting his arrest. At first the jury disagreed . . . That night he was refused admittance at several London hotels, and finally after midnight he wandered to his mother's house in Oakley Street and begged shelter. His brother, with oddly mixed metaphor, says, 'He came tapping with his beak against



OSCAR WILDE NOT AMONG FRIENDS

An adverse view of the poet's American tour of 1881-82 from caricature
in the New York Graphic

the window-pane and fell down on my threshold like a wounded stag.' " His second trial closed with his being found guilty and sentenced to two years' hard labor. Literary history contains no record of a parallel disaster.

Two years' hard labor means, in England, just twice three hundred and sixty-five days' hard labor—for Wilde it came to one day more, since 1896 happened to be a leap year. He was released from Reading Gaol on May 19, 1897, his sentence counting from the opening of his trial. He went immediately to France, and never saw England again.

The city of refuge to which he betook himself was the village of Berneval, fronting the Channel some seven miles north of Dieppe. Americans who served in 1917 and 1918 with certain hospital units along the British front will remember it; the guns echoed through it for four years, for Amiens is no great distance to the east. Here, wretched but not utterly friendless, he lived under the name of Sebastian Melmoth—Melmoth from the fantastic story of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which Wilde's eccentric great-great-uncle, Charles Robert Maturin, had published in 1820, and Sebastian from the early Christian martyr whom the Emperor Diocletian ordered to be slain by his archers. The British prison garb is flecked with arrow points.

§3. On July 19, just two months after his release, Wilde wrote to the London publisher, Leonard Smithers, that he was at work on a poem. There is a further reference in a letter to Smithers of August 4, and on August 24 the completed manuscript was sent to London. It was to be typed, "on good paper—not tissue paper." Wilde's aversion to flimsy (here, the good American newspaper word) produced a year later one of his most familiar *jeux de mots*, when he once more pleaded for "good thick paper—not tissue, as I cannot correct tissue—and one should not waste tissue. So, at least, the doctors say."

There is credible evidence that Wilde did not even conceive the idea of writing *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* while he was in prison. One book, however, he both conceived and wrote there—the moving *De Profundis*, which was smuggled beyond

the walls, in a manner of speaking, in the form of letters, and was published posthumously with an introduction by Wilde's loyal friend and literary executor, Robert Ross.

It was Ross who arranged affairs between Wilde and Smithers—"he was the only publisher I could find;" Ross wrote of him, "who had the courage to issue his works." Smithers had his weaknesses—Wilde's bibliographer, Stuart Mason, more than intimates that when Smithers announced an issue as limited to, say, a hundred copies, he was frequently liberal in his interpretation. But his virtues outweighed his faults. Bernard Mudiman, in *The Men of the Nineties*, calls him "an extraordinary figure, worthy of a romance. . . . He was no mere publisher but a man of considerable scholarship, who not only issued but finished the Sir Richard Burton translation of Catullus. Round him, to a considerable extent, the vanishing group [of the 'nineties] rallied for a little while before Death smote them one by one. Here is no place to pay due justice to this amiable Benvenuto Cellini of book printing himself, but it must be remembered his figure bulks large in the closing scenes. He kept Dowson from starvation. Beardsley wrote of him as 'our publisher' . . . If he did exceed certain rules for himself, he at least took risks to help others. He was no supine battener on the profits of books for young ladies' seminaries. He was a printer, and his bankruptcy may be said to have closed the period."

The Ballad of Reading Gaol was published on February 13, 1898—two days before the destruction of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor. The first edition consisted (ostensibly and probably actually) of eight hundred copies on handmade paper and thirty copies on Japanese vellum. It was, of necessity, a slender book. The covers were of a green-yellow linen with a white linen backstrip. But it was a well-made, well-printed book for half-a-crown—the printing was done by the Chiswick Press, though its name did not appear. The Japanese vellum copies came higher—a guinea each. The title-page was striking, and not the least striking feature was the fact that the poem was announced as by C.3.3.—Wilde's name did not appear until the

seventh edition (1899). The third edition, however, consisting of ninety-nine copies, was signed by the author, even though his name was not printed.

Wilde meanwhile was living pretty much from hand to mouth. His wife had remained loyal to him, seeing him for the last time in Reading Gaol when she went to break to him the news of his mother's death. She did not herself long survive her mother-in-law, dying in April, 1898, a few weeks after the appearance of the *Ballad*. Wilde's own end was not long delayed. He died in Paris on November 30, 1900. A month later the 'nineties and the nineteenth century themselves were over.

Wilde was first buried at Bagneux, but a few years later his body was removed to the statued magnificence of Père Lachaise, and the fine relief of a sphinx by Epstein was reared above his grave. On the reverse appear four lines from the *Ballad*:

And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

No one has ever troubled to disturb the rest of Charles Thomas Wooldridge, buried in quicklime in an unmarked grave in the yard of Reading Gaol.

§4. In the early weeks of his expatriation Wilde had sent a manuscript copy of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* to Elisabeth Marbury, who had long been his representative in the United States, asking her if she could place it and "get him a few pounds for it." He asked that the manuscript be returned to him, and this was duly done. Miss Marbury, with the exercise of some ingenuity, was able to dispose of the *Ballad* to Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* for two hundred and fifty dollars. The story is recounted in Miss Marbury's volume of reminiscences, *My Crystal Ball* (1923), which also relates, among other interesting Wildeana, how, when a London theatrical manager withdrew *An Ideal Husband* following Wilde's arrest, the courageous Daniel Frohman continued to offer it in New York "until the play no longer attracted patronage."

The superb five-volume catalogue of Wilde books, manuscripts, and ana in the library of William Andrews Clark, Jr., assigns priority for the book appearance in America of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* to an edition published at New York in 1899 by Benjamin R. Tucker which exists in two bindings, blue linen boards and white paper wrappers. It seems incredible that nearly a year—perhaps more than a year—elapsed following the appearance of the first Smithers edition before an American edition appeared, but one must beware of attempting to gainsay the designation in the Clark catalogue without absolute proof of the priority of another issue. But once *Reading Gaol* had been issued as a book in America, other editions followed with a bewildering multiplicity of formats and imprints. The poem quickly became a favorite gift issue of bookshops in New York, Boston, and Chicago, and a list of recoverable editions, cited in the Clark catalogue more amply than anywhere else, is proof of the popularity that soon overtook the *Ballad* when it had once become generally available to a public that was devoting much of its reading time to a study of its atlases in an effort to learn where and what the Philippine Islands were.

Pride and Prejudice

JANE AUSTEN was born at Steventon, Hampshire. She wrote six novels, only four of which were published during her lifetime. She was never out of England and she never married. She died at Winchester, fifteen miles from her birthplace, in her forty-second year.

Few careers of permanent significance can be reduced to such a colorless table of essentials. By comparison with Jane Austen the Brontë sisters and Emily Dickinson lived lives of desperate adventure. Charlotte and Emily of Haworth went abroad; Charlotte married, and, before that, appears to have been in love with M. Héger, a foreigner. Emily of Amherst, whose heart may have broken in any one of four different directions (or perhaps in no direction at all), made several trips to Boston and once gazed on the miracles of Washington and Philadelphia. One benison they shared—Jane, Charlotte, and the two Emilys alike. Each had a devoted sister—the Brontës, of course, more than one. What Lavinia Dickinson would one day be to Emily, Cassandra Austen was to Jane. Occasionally the Austen girls were separated, though never by any breath-taking distance, and to the resulting written exchanges of intimacies the world is indebted for much of the biographical data regarding Jane that has come down to us.

Romance, in that specialized sense whereof the object is matrimony, may have touched the life of Jane Austen for a pathetic instant, but the episode, if there was one, can hardly be set upon the schedule of the grand passions of history. The evidence is tenuous, but by no means negligible, for it is accepted by Jane Austen's kinsmen and competent biographers, William

and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh. Its sole documentation is a note by Jane's and Cassandra's niece, Caroline Austen, written long afterward, and based on a conversation with Cassandra. A casual meeting with "a certain Mr. H. E., of the Engineers" set Cassandra musing, and "reminded her strongly of a gentleman whom they [Cassandra and Jane] had met one summer when they were by the sea—I think she said in Devonshire; I don't think they named the place, and I am sure she did not say Lyme, for that I should have remembered—that he seemed greatly attracted by my Aunt Jane—I suppose it was an intercourse of some weeks—and that when they had to part (I imagine he was a visitor also, but his family might have lived near) he was urgent to know where they would be the next summer, implying or perhaps saying that he should be there also, wherever it might be. I can only say that the impression left on Aunt Cassandra was that he had fallen in love with her sister, and was quite in earnest. Soon afterwards they heard of his death. . . . I am sure she thought he was worthy of her sister, from the way in which she recalled his memory, and also that she did not doubt, either, that he would have been a successful suitor." So shadowy a suitor, yet so real!

Caroline Austen's account owes much of its credibility to the conservatism with which it is narrated. "I think"—"I don't think"—"I am sure"—"I suppose"—"I imagine"—"I can only say"—these are the earmarks of cautious assertiveness, of a conviction which has its acknowledged limitations but which, as far as it goes, is none the less a definite conviction. This hazy but real recollection discloses, according to the Austen-Leighs, "all the facts that are known" regarding Jane's one romance. Caroline Austen, they report, "was a person of great ability, and endowed with a wonderfully active and retentive memory. . . . She has the unimpeachable authority of Cassandra to support her; we can therefore feel confidence in the truth of the story, although date, place, and even the name of the gentleman are missing." Cassandra must have confided it not without emotion, for it singularly duplicated her own experience. Long

before, probably in 1795, when Jane was twenty, Cassandra had become engaged to a young clergyman, who went to the West Indies as a regimental chaplain and died there two years later of yellow fever.

The Austens' allotment of adventure, in Jane's and Cassandra's generation, was assigned entire to their two brothers, Charles and Francis, who entered the navy and rose to be admirals. Charles, at seventeen, was aboard the *Unicorn* during a successful two-hundred-mile chase of the French frigate *La Tribune*, and high emprise continued to rule his destiny until 1852, when he fell a victim to cholera on the Irrawaddy. Francis, five years his senior, outlived him by thirteen years, dying in 1865 at the age of ninety-one. To Francis's lot also fell a great share of excitement, but he missed—no fault of his own—the grand thrill that might have been. One October morning in 1805 his commander, learning that the French fleet was coming out of Cadiz, bustled off to bear a hand in the inevitable battle, but the winds were contrary, and there was no Trafalgar for Francis Austen.

§2. Jane Austen's placid career appears all the more placid by contrast with the general turbulence of the times. She was born in the year of Lexington and Bunker Hill. She died two years after Waterloo. The news of those great days penetrated slowly to Steventon and found little reflection in her letters. Not everyone took the newspaper—the Austens seem to have read theirs at second hand after Mr. Holder of Ashe had done with his. Jane's and Cassandra's father was the village rector, and Jane spent the first sixteen years of her life at Steventon's rectory, concluding her formal schooling when she was nine. She was an excellent housekeeper and an expeditious one. She had time in abundance, and before she was sixteen she had written many stories in copybooks, for some of which Cassandra made colored illustrations. Before she was twenty-one she was engaged on a more ambitious project, a novel called *First Impressions*, the composition of which occupied some ten months—they were the months in which Napoleon was making

a name for himself in Italy. On its completion the Reverend George Austen, assuming, in addition to the rôle of admiring parent, that of literary agent, dispatched the manuscript to Robert Cadell, the London publisher, with this letter:

"I have in my possession a manuscript novel, comprising 3 vols., about the length of Miss Burney's 'Evelina'. As I am well aware of what consequence it is that a work of this sort shd. make its first appearance under a respectable name, I apply to you. I shall be much obliged, therefore, if you will inform me whether you choose to be concerned in it, what will be the expense of publishing it at the author's risk, and what you will venture to advance for the property of it, if on perusal it is approved of. Should you give any encouragement, I will send you the work."

To this naïve proposal (which omitted even the essential fact that the author, like the author of *Evelina*, was a woman) Mr. Cadell's inevitable answer was No. The shock was not devastating. Miss Jane immediately set to work on another novel, called *Sense and Sensibility*, a first draft of which, called *Elinor and Marianne*, had been written in her girlhood. The following year she was busy with *Northanger Abbey*.

This spurt of activity, coupled with the fact that she did not see print until 1811, is difficult to account for. One can take a leaf from Caroline Austen's book and think, suppose, and imagine. There were numerous distractions—Brother Henry's marriage, the family's removal to Bath (and then to Southampton and Chawton), Jane's possible romance, the death of her father, the death by accident of a dear friend, the thousand and one little businesses of a clergyman's daughter. Let it be remembered, too, that while few who have ever set pen to paper have done so "for amusement," Jane Austen came closer to it than most.

The manuscript of *Northanger Abbey* may have been disposed of as early as 1803 for ten pounds, for six years later the declared purchaser, Richard Crosby, in answer to an inquiry said that he had indeed paid that sum for it, "but there was not

any time stipulated for its publication, neither are we bound to publish it." Should anyone else attempt to issue it "we shall take proceedings to stop the sale." The manuscript would be restored "for the same as we paid for it."

In the middle of 1809 Jane and Cassandra were together at Chawton, to which circumstance (a circumstance unfortunate for posterity, but not for Cassandra and Jane) is due the fact that there is no correspondence to throw light on the important period when *Sense and Sensibility* was preparing for the press. April, 1811, found Jane at Brother Henry's in London, part of her mission being to correct proof for her novel, which was to be brought out by "T. Egerton, Military Library, Whitehall." The book was issued in October or November, according to Jane Austen's bibliographer, Geoffrey Keynes—three volumes in boards, price fifteen shillings. The edition was small—probably a thousand copies or fewer, Mr. Keynes estimates. By July, 1813, the edition was exhausted. It had netted its author one hundred and fifty pounds "besides the copy-right, if that should be of any value."

The success of *Sense and Sensibility* proved sufficient incentive for its author to resurrect the manuscript of *First Impressions* which Robert Cadell had so summarily turned down sixteen years before. Retitled *Pride and Prejudice*, it was published in January, 1813, probably in a larger first edition than *Sense and Sensibility*. The author apparently received one hundred pounds outright, for "I have now," she wrote her brother Francis, "written myself into £250, which only makes me long for more." A second edition appeared the same year and a third in 1817. *Mansfield Park* was issued in 1814 with the Egerton imprint and *Emma* in 1816 under the aegis of John Murray. Mr. Keynes surmises that it may have been Egerton's reluctance to embark on a second edition of *Mansfield Park* that determined Jane Austen to seek another and greater publisher.

All four novels were issued anonymously. *Sense and Sensibility* was "by a Lady," *Pride and Prejudice* "by the Author of 'Sense and Sensibility,'" *Mansfield Park* "by the Author of

'Sense and Sensibility,' and 'Pride and Prejudice,' " and *Emma* "by the Author of 'Pride and Prejudice.'" These assignations are striking as indicative of the early establishment of *Pride and Prejudice* as Jane Austen's most significant accomplishment as a novelist. The authorship was somewhat of an open secret. When *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously in 1818 (they were "by the author of 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Mansfield Park,' &c.") the text was preceded by a biographical notice of the author written by her brother Henry Austen.

It is an odd fact that while all the novels were quickly available in French translations, Mr. Keynes was able to find only one other translation in a language other than French in the century and a quarter that has elapsed since the original appearance of *Sense and Sensibility*. As recently as 1924 a Spanish edition of *Pride and Prejudice* was issued.

Jane Austen had been dead fifteen years before her novels were available in American editions. When they came they came in a rush. Carey & Lea of Philadelphia issued *Elizabeth Bennet: or, Pride and Prejudice* in 1832, "First American from the Third London Edition," in two volumes, boards. Rather oddly, it was described on the title-page as "by the author of 'Sense and Sensibility,' &c." although no American edition of *Sense and Sensibility* was to be available until the following year. By the end of 1833 all six novels had appeared with the Carey & Lea imprint. Anonymity was preserved (it is difficult to say for what reason) only in the instance of *Elizabeth Bennet*. The others were "by Miss Austen."

§3. "Copies of the novels in original boards," writes Mr. Keynes, "have for many years been expensive items in the book-sellers' catalogues, but bound copies have been attainable by the ordinary person until comparatively recent years, and if he were gifted with economic foresight it is not so long since they might have been had for a negligible sum. In 1913 my brother (an economist) [decidedly; his name is John Maynard Keynes] stated in my hearing his belief that first editions of

Jane Austen were selling much below their value, whether estimated on the basis of their intrinsic merit or their rarity. The timely warning has its satisfactory result in the shelf in my library filled by a complete set of the original issues, including the second editions, which proved to be almost the most difficult to obtain."

The rewards of letters in pre-Victorian England can be gauged accurately so far as Jane Austen is concerned. Not long before her death she set the figures down apparently as a memorandum for her own edification. They totaled, "over and above the £600 in the Navy Fives," £82 13s.

Some fifteen years later Richard Bentley bought the copyrights of the novels from Henry and Cassandra Austen, paying two hundred and fifty pounds for them, and apparently conducting successful negotiations for the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice*, which had remained with Egerton. In 1833 Bentley issued the first collected edition of Jan Austen, in five volumes. Her real vogue, however, seems not to have arrived until after 1870, in which year her nephew Edward Austen compiled a memoir which the Austen-Leighs regard as "an important contributory cause" to the growth of her fame.

Waverley

IF SIR WALTER SCOTT had cared nothing about fishing, the history of the English novel would perhaps be marked by a dark gap representing the passage of a sterile quarter-century—just such a dark gap as the eye notes, on a clear moonless winter night, in that odd bifurcation in the Milky Way in the constellation Cygnus. If Sir Walter Scott had been an enthusiastic fisherman, the history of the English novel would perhaps be marked by that same dark gap.

One day when he was in his early forties, Scott, hunting for some flies in a drawer, came on the fragment of a story—six or seven chapters—on which he had begun work eight years earlier. Now if Scott had cared nothing about fishing he would have had no flies, and if he had been an enthusiastic fisherman he would have known where his flies were just as accurately as P. T. Barnum knew where he had last left Jumbo.

The outcome of the expedition on which Scott embarked following the rediscovery of the flies is of no moment. Of surpassing importance, however, was the rediscovery of the manuscript. It was called *Waverley*, such as it was, and Scott evidently detected, in the reperusal of the fragment, virtues which he had not noted before—many writers have enjoyed a like experience. At all events he resumed composition with characteristic energy, and to such good purpose that, once well embarked on his task, he completed it in three weeks.

Scott's fluency of composition—a fluency so remarkable that one marvels not so much at the mental effort it necessitated as at the sheer physical—is attested in a famous incident recorded by his subsequent son-in-law and biographer, John Gibson

Lockhart. Lockhart had his shortcomings—well-nigh unpardonable ones if he actually cast the slurs at John Keats which have been attributed to him—, but he had also the genius to note that mass of facts alone (if there is mass and if there are facts) can make a biography monumental. He lumped the trivial with the essential and made the trivial important. The following incident could well have been omitted from his seven-volume life of Scott, but it was not omitted, and so it survives as one of the notable and most quoted portrayals of an author at work—as it happens, on *Waverley*. A friend of Lockhart's, William Menzies, lived next to Scott in Edinburgh, and Lockhart, in June, 1814, attended a dinner at the Menzies home where most of the guests were, like himself, lawyers.

"When my companion's worthy father and uncle," records Lockhart, "after seeing two or three bottles go round, left the juveniles to themselves, the weather being hot, we adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northwards. After carousing here for an hour or more, I observed that a shade had come over the aspect of my friend, who happened to be placed immediately opposite to myself, and said something that intimated a fear of his being unwell. 'No,' said he, 'I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will.' I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand, which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. 'Since we sat down,' he said, 'I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished, and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied; and so it will be till candles are brought it, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night—I can't stand the sight of it when I'm not at my books.' 'Some stupid, dogged engrossing clerk, probably,' exclaimed myself, 'or some giddy youth in our society.' 'No, boys,' said our host; 'I well know what hand it is—'tis Walter Scott's.'"

§2. An illness suffered in infancy, now known to have been infantile paralysis, lamed Scott for life, and, surmises Andrew Lang, "probably deprived Wellington of a gallant officer." The impediment could not tarnish one of the most kindly, gentle, and lovable dispositions in literary history, but it must have irked an otherwise stalwart soul who grew up in an era of valorous feats of arms as rousing as, and rather more momentous than, those border forays whose stories sang in his blood from childhood. Scott was four years old when Bunker Hill was taken, eighteen when the Bastille fell, thirty-four when Nelson died in the hour of victory, forty-four when Waterloo was won. He was born when the growl of discontent in the American colonies was rising into the thunder of rebellion; when he died, Europe was sullenly subsiding after a year of revolt that was the harbinger of more desperate democratic ventures yet to come—it was 1832.

Destined for the law by the prosperous man of law who was his father, Scott was able to turn his training to good account and make it serve the no less arduous trade which he would soon adopt. "He acquired, as a copyist," says Lang, "the quality of steady prolonged writing. . . . He once covered, without interruption, a hundred and twenty pages of folio, at three-pence the page, gaining thirty shillings to spend on books or a dirk. . . . After his ruin, after his breakdown in health, he once wrote the 'copy' of sixty printed pages of a novel in a day." Young Menzies obviously did not exaggerate the activity of the hand in the window.

In 1796, four years after he was called to the bar and a year before his marriage, Scott published a translation of two poems of Gottfried Bürger, and in 1799 a translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* . He had learned, obviously, a little German. He was reasonably familiar with French and Spanish. But most of all he knew Scotland and Scots lore. He began to write ballads, and the year that saw the Goethe translation saw also the appearance of his earliest efforts in this field. The fact is of special importance for the reason that the printer was James Bal-

lantyne of Kelso, who, as "Aldiborontiphoscophornio," would become a leading character in the tragedy of Scott's career.

The cornerstone of Scott's enduring fame was laid in 1805 with the publication of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. This was followed in 1808 by *Marmion*, in 1810 by *The Lady of the Lake*, in 1811 by *The Vision of Don Roderick*, and in 1813 by *Rokeby*. But these were only the high points of eight busy years, years that witnessed the accomplishment of an amount of literary chores—research, reviews, editing, whatever task came next to that indefatigable hand—which has little competition for sheer bulk in the chronicle of English literature.

An insignificant by-product of these years was the beginning of *Waverley*. In the middle of this period (1809) Scott took the unfortunate step of allying himself with the Ballantyne brothers, James and John, as a secret partner in their ambitious publishing enterprise. The Ballantynes were long on ideas and short on business sense and cash. Scott's poems had proved phenomenally successful, and in five years he was able to put some nine thousand pounds into the Ballantyne venture. In 1810 he showed James Ballantyne the *Waverley* fragment, but James was not impressed, and the fragment went into the drawer with the fishing tackle to lie fallow another four years.

In 1813 the nemesis of mismanagement caught up with the Ballantynes, and ruin would have been their portion and Scott's had not the company, in Lang's phrase, "found a haven in the capacious bosom of Constable." Archibald Constable is one of the great names in publishing history. At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to Peter Hill, Edinburgh bookseller and friend of Burns, and early became something of an authority on early Scottish books and literature. Before he was twenty he had set up in business for himself and issued a catalogue of rare books. The catalogue must have been a phenomenal success, because, according to Henry Curwen, it "soon drew to his shop all the bibliographers and lovers of learning in the city," who must have constituted no mean fraction of the population. Constable was not the first to make the short jump

from bookselling to publishing; as a publisher he combined (at first) zeal with discretion, and was soon well on the high-road to success.

Scott had long known him, as bookseller and publisher alike. There had been a trivial falling-out, but it was mended with the Ballantyne collapse. Completing the manuscript of *Waverley*, Scott offered it to Constable, who had the acumen to offer seven hundred pounds for the copyright. "The generosity of Constable's prices was a byword," according to A. S. Collins, but Scott, on his part, had the good sense to reject the offer in favor of half profits.

The story that *Waverley* was first sent to various London publishers and rejected by them severally long persisted—the same story has persisted about every book that has eventually become a success. It is always a good story, but too, too often it simply is not true. It would be pleasant if it were true of *Waverley*. For the consternation and remorse of the London publishers would have been acute (and their consternation, perhaps, was acute anyway) when *Waverley* began to sell. The first edition, consisting of a thousand copies, was exhausted in five weeks, which could hardly be considered remarkable. Four thousand more copies, however, were disposed of by the end of the year, a thousand more in 1815, fifteen hundred in 1816, and two thousand in 1817, according to Mr. Collins. And these figures fade into proper insignificance in comparison to those available for subsequent *Waverley* novels—the first ten thousand copies of *Rob Roy* (1817), for example, were taken up in three weeks. Within a few months—early enough to be dated 1815—*Waverley* appeared with independent local imprints in Boston and New York, and each of these editions has been catalogued in recent years as the "first American edition." The full truth of the business will be known only when some painstaking student turns his attention to the problem and submits a report bulwarked by incontrovertible data.

From 1814 to his death in 1832 Scott produced (including the four series of *Tales of My Landlord* and the two series of

Chronicles of the Canongate as six units, which is hardly fair to Scott) twenty-three Waverley novels—all three-deckers except for the half-dozen which were four-deckers, a total of seventy-five volumes. And he was turning out other copy besides.

Such prosperity, perhaps, was more than Archibald Constable could stand. It was about 1825—a fair year that ended foul, even as 1929—that Constable had the brilliant idea of selling books to the masses. Three-deckers cost a guinea and more; Constable would produce books “at three shillings or half a crown a volume every month, which must and shall sell, not by thousands, and tens of thousands, but by hundreds of thousands, and, ay, by millions! Twelve volumes in the year, a halfpenny of profit on every copy which will make me richer than all the copyrights of all the quartos that ever were, or ever will be, hot-pressed!”

Scott was enthusiastic, and set out to produce a life of Napoleon that would usher in this publishing millennium. But the millennium was not to be. Before a further step could be taken, the house of Constable had crashed in ruin, and Scott found himself obligated to the prodigious extent of one hundred and seventeen thousand pounds.

The story of his splendid struggle in the face of this staggering blow has heartened mankind for a century. The “con-founded hand” moved faster now than ever it had moved before. Before his death in 1832 Scott had made good sixty-three thousand pounds, and the end was not yet. Insurance worth twenty-two thousand pounds was available, and Robert Cadell, Constable’s son-in-law and successor, advanced the remainder on the security of Scott’s copyrights. That the fight was an essential cause of Scott’s decline and death is obvious. A melancholy aspect of his plight was that within a few months of his passing a brain ailment lent him sometimes the illusion that the whole debt was paid.

§3. From the collector’s point of view, *Waverley* is the key volume of a set of the Waverley novels, both on account of its scarcity and also because the modern novel, or at least the mod-

ern novel-reader, dates from its appearance. "It was Scott, the greatest of readers," says Lang, "who inaugurated the reign of novel-reading, and very much chagrined he would be could he see the actual results: the absolute horror with which mankind shun every other study. It could never have occurred to Scott, that, within less than a hundred years, male and female novelists, often as ignorant of books as of life, would monopolize the general attention and would give themselves out as authorities on politics, philosophy, ethics, society, theology, religion, and Homeric criticism."

Waverley, therefore, is of surpassing importance historically whether anyone reads it or does not read it today. Certainly two or three others among the Waverley novels have always been far more widely read than *Waverley* itself. There are, of course, people who say that nobody reads any of the Waverley novels today, but these are all people who once read one or two of them, and there are doubtless thousands of young people reading them at this minute who will be saying, fifty years from now, that nobody reads the Waverley novels.

The bibliography of *Waverley* remained somewhat haphazard, despite the high cost of owning it in first edition, until the appearance of Greville Worthington's bibliography of the Waverley novels in 1931. Not even a brief summary of his collation of *Waverley* itself can be attempted here—it covers seventeen pages. Mr. Worthington is iconoclastic regarding a "point" that has done catalogue duty for years. On page 136 of Volume II of the first edition, line one contains the word *our* for *your*, and this was long hailed as a mark of first issue. Mr. Worthington reports: "It is interesting to note that in the second and third editions the reading is still *our*, but the line of type has been pushed up tight, so that there is no space for a *y* before *our*. I have never seen a copy with the word *your* correctly printed, but I do not agree with the hitherto accepted verdict that the absence of the *y* denotes a first issue. I believe that the presence of the *y* would prove the book to be in its first state, but I am doubtful whether a copy containing the *y*

exists for the following reason. I have had the opportunity of examining an exceedingly interesting copy of 'Waverley'; a copy moreover which was almost certainly one of the very first copies to be sent out by the publishers. This copy is the one which was owned and inscribed by Henry Mackenzie, to whom the book was dedicated. The fact that it was not a presentation copy from the author, as might be expected, is easily explained. The publishers did all in their power to keep Scott's name from the public, as they had no faith in his capability to write a novel, and they feared that 'Waverley' would fail and damage the author's reputation as a poet. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that the publishers sent Mackenzie his copy at Scott's request before the book was issued to the public, and this being so, the y of the word *your* should in this copy surely be in place if it ever was. The y, however, is missing as usual, and there is no other variant to stamp the book as being in an earlier state than the other copies I have examined. The copy referred to above is now in the possession of William C. Van Antwerp of San Francisco."

It might be noted in passing that Katherine Mayo's *That Damn Y* (1920) was not a contribution to the bibliography of *Waverley*.

Jane Eyre

MARIA BRONTË died September 15, 1821, at the bleak parsonage in Haworth, of the West Riding of Yorkshire, soothed perhaps by the thought that in her nine years of wifehood she had proved no unworthy helpmeet to the studious, unworldly, crotchety pastor-poet to whom Destiny had entrusted her. Had she not borne him six children—five daughters and a son—to do his name honor?

Patrick Brontë died June 7, 1861. Of his six children, three had done his name honor and one had lent it a mildly lurid prominence. But all alike—good and bad, demure and harum-scarum, the five pathetic saints, and the solitary and no less pathetic sinner—were dead. The funereal perspective stretched back from Charlotte, gone these six years, to Emily, Branwell, Anne, Elizabeth, Maria the daughter, and Maria the mother. Twenty-seven years was the average allotment of existence in that fragile family, if one omits the mathematical irony of including the father's hardy survival to a grim and solitary eighty-four. Only death throve lustily in the rolling moorland waste where the tragedy of the Brontës played itself out—death, and the divine fire.

It was, perhaps, the frequent visitations of the one that helped nurse the flame of the other. In such a house of perpetual sorrow the routine of childhood was a subdued and serious business. There were books, and they were read. There were newspapers and periodicals, doughty *Blackwood's* among them. When these palled, the children wrote little stories, or little plays, and acted them. Some of these juvenile manuscripts survive, each written in a hand incredibly fine—Mr. Brontë, per-

haps, busy at the composition of his sermons, had little paper to spare for these ephemera of the nursery. It is worthy of remark, by the way, that in the Brontë household the nurseries were called the children's study.

The daughters not only received genuine cultural advantages at home, but also were well schooled for their time, place, and circumstances. Training and environment, no less than some freak of heredity, must be invoked to explain the facile flowering of the four-ply Brontë genius. Branwell, the object of the devoted homage of his sisters, received, instead of formal schooling, the particular care of his father, and his ultimate fall was from a pedestal which the father had at least assisted in fashioning. Branwell Brontë's escapades were neither heinous nor unusual; he who was a bold, bad creature in Haworth would have appeared but a pallid reprobate against the background of London. Branwell Brontë's memory, at this distance, merits only two emotions: pity for his human failings, and admiration for his intellectual powers.

From pupil to teacher was the almost inevitable transition of that day for a humble curate's daughters, and the application of the rule to the Brontë trio, familiar enough to the reader of their novels, need not be detailed here. But a new world dawned for Charlotte and Emily early in 1842 when they set out for Brussels and the boarding school of M. Constantin Héger. M. Héger was to become, thanks to the accident of the Brontës' enrollment and wholly in his own despite, one of the great romantic figures of the Victorian era. He was a solid, balanced person and a competent teacher—a great teacher, one incisive student of the Brontë chronicle has characterized him. Out of the relationship of teacher and pupil (and subsequently of master and teacher) sprang the Great Brontë Question: Was Charlotte in love with M. Héger?

The question had been agitated and debated for more than half a century when, in 1913, the *London Times* published four letters from Charlotte to M. Héger which had just been given to the British Museum by M. Héger's son, then president of the



THE SISTERS AS SEEN BY THE BROTHER
Emily, Anne and Charlotte Brontë from the painting by Patrick Branwell Brontë. Reproduced by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London and M. L. Parrish, Philadelphia.

Royal Academy of Medicine at Brussels. The letters are available in Clement K. Shorter's *The Brontës and Their Circle* and in M. (not yet the Abbé) Ernest Dimnet's *The Brontë Sisters*, to which Andrew Lang paid the striking tribute of saying that "the best book on the Brontës is in French."

The Abbé Dimnet's conclusions after a study of the documents are these:

"What is love? and what is it to be in love? Divergency in the answers to these simple questions is apparently apt to make people cross and prove that the questions are not simple. The interest in one person which leads so many people to marriage is constantly and unchallengeably called love by people who refuse the name to 'devotion all-absorbing and passionate to an extraordinary degree.' Racial elements evidently intervene where philosophy ought to remain supreme. So I shall leave this question, which ought no longer to be irritating but evidently still is so, merely stating my conviction, first, that Charlotte never asked herself if she was or was not in love with Monsieur Héger, and second, that had the latter seemed inclined to show, in his turn, anything like 'devotion all-absorbing and passionate to an extraordinary degree,' she would have promptly silenced him. There was no divorce in Belgium in those days, and had there been, Charlotte Brontë would not for one instant have considered the possibility. . . . Everything is said when it is recalled that, as everybody agrees, Charlotte Brontë was as pure as she was impassioned."

In other words, the answer to the Great Brontë Question is that least satisfactory of all answers: Yes, and No. And this, perhaps, was Charlotte's own answer to her own questioning heart.

Haworth must have seemed trebly depressing after Brussels. The sisters debated the matter of starting a school, but the idea never went further. One day thereafter, toward the end of 1843, there occurred in the Haworth parsonage a slight but momentous accident. Charlotte chanced to pick up a copybook that proved to be filled with Emily's poems. Charlotte read them, and praised them to her sister. Emily was indignant, not at the

praise, but at the discovery. Anne timidly offered hers for the oldest sister's inspection. Charlotte had a few poems, too. Why not a book of poems by three sisters? There was the Tennysonian precedent, *Poems by Two Brothers* (actually three brothers). Emily was won over; the manuscript was assembled and started on its rounds.

It shuttled back and forth between Haworth and London, and between Haworth and Edinburgh, nearly a dozen times. And then the sisters took the boldest step of their lives. They brought it out at their own expense, in May, 1846, as *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*. Care was taken in the selection of the pseudonyms to choose designations that might be either masculine or feminine, though probably neither before nor since was a girl christened Currer or Ellis or Acton, while there are numerous male precedents (today at least) for Ellis and Acton. The girls had managed to buy a share each in the new Liverpool Railroad, and the Abbé Dimnet surmises that the Brontë holdings may have been dumped on the market to pay the house of Aylott and Jones of London the demanded thirty-one pounds.

It is of record that two copies were sold within a year. A few review copies were sent out; later Charlotte dispatched others to a handful of literary notables. Those who like to play with book values can profitlessly conjecture what the copy she sent to Tennyson would bring today. Uninscribed, the *Poems* with the Aylott and Jones imprint is among the conspicuous rarities of the nineteenth century.

§2. Publication of the poems, even though it was done at the authors' expense, proved a spur to composition at Haworth. Ere long, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne had completed novels, and the three manuscripts were bundled off to Messrs. Aylott and Jones, who, blind to the sales possibilities of issuing three novels by three sisters simultaneously, returned them. One reason may have been that Messrs. Aylott and Jones did not know that Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were sisters.

So the package (a far bulkier one than the poems) made, like

them, the dispiriting round of the publishing world. Every time it returned, Charlotte simply crossed out the name of the last addressee and added a new one without changing the wrapper—further indication of a persistent paper shortage at Haworth. Ultimately Charlotte separated her manuscript from the package and sent *The Professor* on its way alone. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* finally reached port with a publisher named Thomas Cautley Newby, whose memory derives such immortality as still adheres to it from the fact of this conjoint acceptance.

The Professor came at last to the hands of William Smith Williams, reader for Smith, Elder & Co., accompanied by a note saying that the author was now at work on a three-volume novel. Mr. Williams returned the manuscript, but expressed eagerness to inspect the new work. Clement Shorter found it difficult to understand why *The Professor* was declined, but himself elsewhere in *The Brontës and Their Circle* offered the suggestion that it was probably refused "rather on account of its insufficient length than for any other cause." It was not published until after Charlotte's death.

Mr. Williams's kindly, critical, and appreciative letter was all the incentive needed for the confident dispatch of the longer novel. It went forward on August 24, 1847, accompanied by the following note:

"I now send you per rail a MS. entitled 'Jane Eyre,' a novel in three volumes, by Currer Bell. I find I cannot prepay the carriage of the parcel, as money for that purpose is not received at the small station-house where it is left. If, when you acknowledge the receipt of the MS., you would have the goodness to mention the amount charged on delivery, I will immediately transmit it in postage stamps. It is better in future to address Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire, as there is a risk of letters otherwise directed not reaching me at present."

The manuscript was accepted overnight. One might almost say it was published overnight, for on October 19, fifty-six days

after its dispatch, Charlotte Brontë received and acknowledged her six author's copies. "You have given the work," she wrote, "every advantage which good paper, clear type, and a seemly outside can supply;—if it fails, the fault will lie with the author,—you are exempt."

But it would soon be proved that there need be no worry on this score. The earliest reviews were somewhat lacking in cordiality, but Mr. Bell believed, quite accurately, that "a brisk sale would be effectual support under the hauteur of lofty critics." A copy of the *Examiner* containing a notice of the book was missent, and Mr. Bell advised: "Allow me to intimate that it would be better in future not to put the name of Currer Bell on the outside of communications; if directed simply to Miss Brontë they will be more likely to reach their destination safely. Currer Bell is not known in the district, and I have no wish that he should become known."

The "effectual support" sought by Mr. Bell was not lacking; in January, 1848, a second edition of *Jane Eyre* appeared—the most famous second edition in the chronicle of Victorian bibliography, and a collector's item in its own right. For this second edition contained the dedication to Thackeray which proved an "effectual support" to *Vanity Fair*.

§3. Some part at least of the early success of *Jane Eyre* was the result of a natural curiosity concerning its authorship. John Gibson Lockhart's interest was piqued to the point of writing William Harrison Ainsworth for information, but Ainsworth could only pass on such gossip as had reached him: "I am sorry I cannot give you any information respecting the Bells,—though I have heard much speculation on the subject. My friend Robert Bell, who was interested in the matter because his name appeared to be the same, thought he had discovered that Jane Eyre was written by Mrs. Procter—Barry Cornwall's wife—and daughter of Basil Montagu. But it was mere surmise. Then again I heard that the book was written by Thackeray's governess—an absurd notion. The proofs, I believe, were sent into Yorkshire."

Jane Eyre's publishers, though actually as much in the dark about the matter as Ainsworth except that they *knew* the proofs had been sent into Yorkshire, were all but convinced that the novel was written by a woman—a belief that Ainsworth did not seem to share: “Currer Bell I agree with you is not a belle.” Charlotte Brontë did not meet her publishers until the summer of 1848, and related her experience thus:

“We found 65 [Cornhill] to be a large bookseller’s shop, in a street almost as bustling as the Strand. We went in, walked up to the counter. There were a great many young men and lads here and there. I said to the first I could accost, ‘May I see Mr. Smith?’ He hesitated, looked a little surprised. We sat down and waited a while, looking at some books on the counter, publications of theirs well known to us, of many of which they had sent us copies as presents. At last we were shown up to Mr. Smith. ‘Is it Mr. Smith?’ I said, looking up through my spectacles at a tall young man. ‘It is.’ I then put his own letter into his hand directed to Currer Bell. He looked at it and then at me again. ‘Where did you get this?’ he said. I laughed at his perplexity; a recognition took place. I gave my real name. . . . Mr. Smith hurried out and returned quickly with one whom he introduced as Mr. Williams, a pale, mild, stooping man of fifty, very much like a faded Tom Dixon. Another recognition and a long nervous shaking of hands. Then followed talk—talk—talk, Mr. Williams being silent, Mr. Smith loquacious.” In any dialogue in which Charlotte Brontë was one of the interlocutors, if one of them was loquacious, it was never Charlotte Brontë—Currer Bell.

There is one touching little incident in the history of *Jane Eyre* that no commentator on the Brontës can avoid mentioning—and all must take it from a common source, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, one of the greatest of the world’s biographies, despite its shortcomings, and a veritable encyclopedia of Brontëana.

In the summer of 1846 Mr. Brontë was stricken blind. An operation for cataract was performed, and was successful. He

was in his seventieth year, and, even apart from his eye trouble, was not in the best of health—and in addition to routine worries there was Branwell. His daughters decided not to add to his burdens by confiding to him the fact that they had turned author. Once, when Mr. Brontë chanced to have answered the postman's call, and was asked for the whereabouts of Currer Bell, he replied, reasonably, that "there was no such person in the parish."

But now it could be told—*Jane Eyre* was out. Emily and Anne argued that Charlotte should bear him the good news. Charlotte "accordingly went into his study one afternoon after his early dinner, carrying with her a copy of the book, and two or three reviews, taking care to include a notice adverse to it." The conversation that followed she conveyed to Mrs. Gaskell as she remembered it:

"Papa, I've been writing a book"

"Have you, my dear?"

"Yes, and I want you to read it."

"I am afraid it will try my eyes too much."

"But it is not in manuscript; it is printed."

"My dear! you've never thought of the expense it will be! It will be almost sure to be a loss, for how can you get a book sold? No one knows you or your name."

"But, papa, I don't think it will be a loss; no more will you, if you will just let me read you a review or two, and tell you more about it."

She read the notices and left the book with him. He joined the girls at tea, and said to Emily and Anne: "Girls, do you know Charlotte has been writing a book, and it is much better than likely?"

He was proud of his children's prowess—and perhaps a little jealous of it. For who then read, or who now reads, *Cottage Poems*, *The Rural Minstrel*, *The Cottage in the Wood*, or *The Maid of Killarney*—who but an occasional and determined student of the career of the Brontë sisters?

§4. *Jane Eyre* made her American début with the Harper im-

print probably toward the end of 1847, although the title-page is dated 1848—there was a Boston edition of 1848, published by Wilkins, Carter & Co., which could hardly have preceded the New York issue. The Harper edition was available in wrappers, with advertisements dated October, 1847, following the text, and the back cover listed “Superb Gift Books, Juveniles, etc., for 1848”—clear indication that the book was ready for distribution at least several days in advance of Christmas, 1847.

Jane’s reception in America was as enthusiastic as it had been at home, though the puzzle of authorship naturally did not arouse quite such a buzz of curiosity. The Reverend Edward Everett Hale, twenty-four years old, and minister of a church in Worcester, wrote home to his mother in a letter unfortunately not dated, but certainly early in 1848: “My long silence must be attributed to various causes, *princeps inter primas* of which is ‘Jane Eyre’! I should have written Monday but each instant of leisure was occupied by ‘Jane Eyre’ and Tuesday, but each similar instant was occupied by the undone work of Monday—and reviewing ‘Jane Eyre.’” Two and a half paragraphs of personal news, then: “But *the* event of the week has been ‘Jane Eyre’; we talk in this house of nothing else, we look back to detached passages morning noon and night and do not often get through a meal without introducing the book for reference. I am perfectly crazy about it. I can hardly say I want more because I read and re-read it again and again. It lies open on its face beside us now.”

The opinion of the Worcester minister (who some years later would achieve as assured an immortality with another example of anonymous fiction) echoed the sentiments of thousands. And a few miles further west, and a year or so later, shy Emily Dickinson read a borrowed copy of *Jane Eyre*, unwitting that the world would one day note a precarious parallel between Amherst and Haworth.

Moby-Dick

SOME TWENTY-TWO HUNDRED YEARS have elapsed since the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, probably the most combustible of the seven wonders of the world, was set on fire by a young man in search of immortality. He had his wish, after a fashion, and is forever embalmed in Bartlett, where anyone wishing to lend encouragement to his reprehensible method of acquiring posthumous notoriety may seek him out. His name will not be mentioned in the present paper.

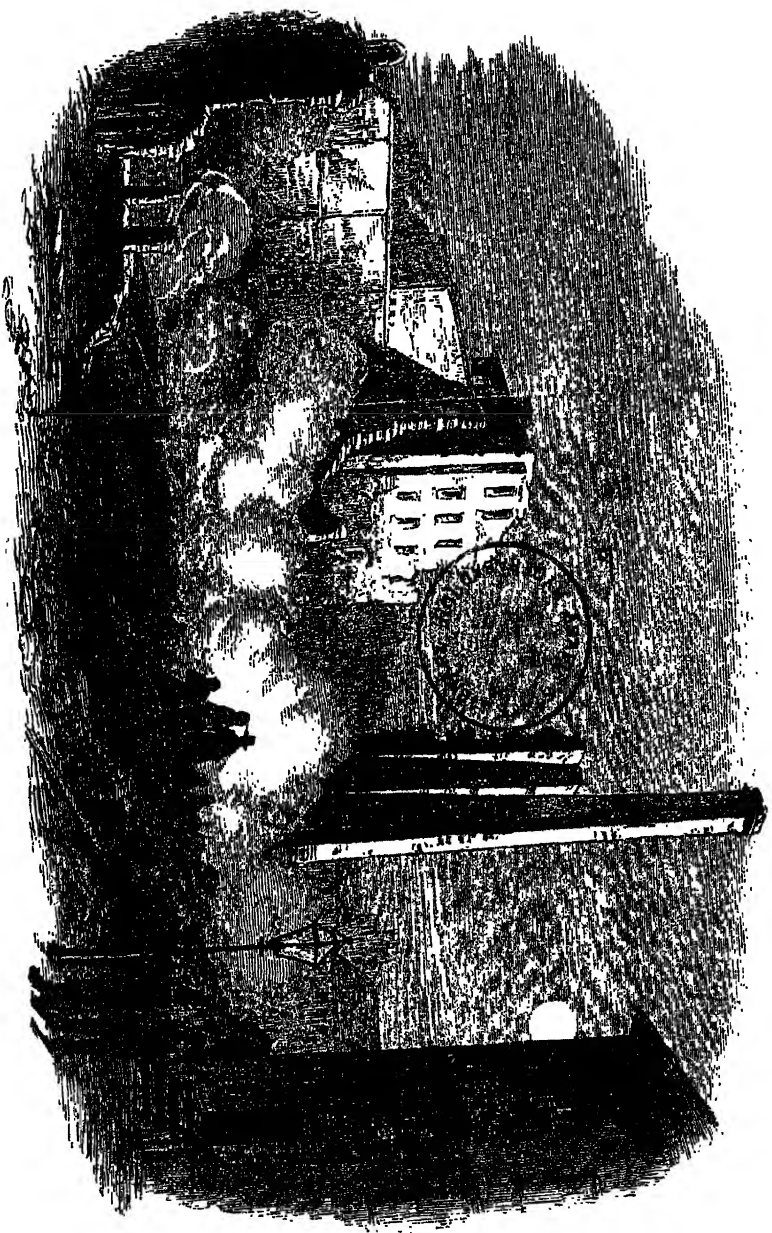
Neither (but only because no contemporary newspaper account appears to have emblazoned it) will that of a plumber who was working in the camphene room of Harper & Brothers' printing and publishing establishment on Pearl Street, New York, on December 10, 1853. Camphene (better known to a later day as oil of turpentine) was employed to wash the ink off the rollers of the printing press, and as a precaution against fire the Harpers confined its use to a small zinc-lined chamber. The plumber lit a match—to light his lamp, J. Henry Harper charitably explained in *The House of Harper* (1912); "for the purpose of lighting his cigar or pipe," declared the *New York Tribune* of December 12, 1853, which further asserted that the plumber used a lighted piece of paper and not a match. But whatever he used and whatever he used it for, both accounts agree that he tossed the brand into a pan of presumed water. The presumption was false, and the forthright plumber went out of there, not to realize until some hours later, if at all, that he had started one of the half-dozen most disastrous fires in the history of New York.

As a sheer spectacle the fire left nothing to be desired, prob-

ably surpassing, in this respect, the destruction of the Temple of Diana. "In all the conflagrations that we have witnessed—and their name is legion—we have never seen anything to equal this in grandeur," wrote the *Tribune* reporter, who soared to heights of utter lyricism in his three-column account of the episode in a day when nothing less than one of Mr. Pierce's messages to Congress could reasonably hope to command so much space. The *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, whose eleven-column page was a little larger than two average-sized newspaper pages of today, printed a more concentrated account and depended on italics and small capitals to bring home the enormity of the offender's carelessness: "The plumber, after lighting a paper, *threw it, as he supposed, into a pan of water, but it proved to be a can of CAMPHENE.*" The following day (Tuesday, December 13), the *Courier* announced: "The plumber who was the cause of the destructive fire did not return to his employer's place of business on Saturday, nor has his whereabouts been heard of." And thus anonymously does he vanish out of history.

The mischief he accomplished, had it been deliberate, must have exceeded his wildest expectations. The camphene first roared into flames about one o'clock in the afternoon; by five o'clock, according to J. Henry Harper, "sixteen large buildings had been destroyed, embracing property estimated as worth over a million and a half of dollars. Of this loss nearly, if not quite, a million was borne by Harper & Brothers, their entire insurance amounting to less than two hundred thousand dollars. This was said to have been the largest fire loss sustained up to that time by a commercial house."

As a catastrophic invasion of the precincts of letters the Harper disaster was comparable to the great fire of London in 1666, in its sweep through St. Paul's Churchyard. The entire January issue of *Harper's Magazine* was destroyed—not a sheet, plate, woodcut, proof, or line of copy was saved. Some authors, even in those pre-carbon-paper days, made copies of their manuscripts, or retained proofs. But consider the plight of Professor



LOST—297 COPIES OF *MOBY-DICK*

The Harper fire of 1853 helped make arduous the path of the Melville collector.
From a contemporary print in the collection of Henry Hoyns.

Henry Drisler of Columbia, whose new edition of Yonge's *English-Greek Lexicon* vanished lock, stock, and barrel, alpha to omega. Eighteen years were to pass before the professor had a fresh batch of copy ready.

During the two years preceding the fire, however, the Harpers had disposed of twenty-five thousand copies of Professor Drisler's version of the famous Liddell and Scott lexicon (the original "Alice in Wonderland" was one of Dr. Liddell's three daughters). Professor Drisler was patently of much vaster importance to the Harpers than was Herman Melville, who, as one of the minor sufferers from the nameless plumber's carelessness, must have read the news accounts of the fire with some approach to equanimity. Of seven books of his then in the Harpers' hands, from one hundred and eighty-five to four hundred and ninety-four copies of each were destroyed—and the plates of all seven. Among these, according to the carefully assembled data presented in Raymond M. Weaver's *Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic* (1921), were two hundred and ninety-seven copies of Mr. Melville's *Moby-Dick*.

§2. Melville was thirty-four at the time of the fire, but his literary career was already tending toward an end, although more years than he had yet lived were to accrue to him. He had been born in New York City in the summer of 1819, a few weeks after Walt Whitman had sent up his primal barbaric yawp out on Long Island. Before Herman was five years old the family moved from his birthplace on Park Street to "a new brick 2 story house replete with conveniences," as his father described it, to be had at a rental of three hundred dollars a year. But it was far uptown, or rather out of town, on Bleeker Street (which thoroughfare a generation later would become the original metropolitan lodgment of virtually all of Horatio Alger, Jr.'s, heroes), and it was selected as "almost uniting the advantages of town and country," the father at the same time transferring his importing establishment to a new location on Pearl Street—the identical Pearl Street that was later the scene of the disastrous Harper fire.

Melville's lineage was of a quality and character that would have admitted him, had he cared about it, to the innermost circles of Yankee ancestor worship. His mother's father, Brigadier-General (then Colonel) Peter Gansevoort, had successfully defended Fort Stanwix, in the fastnesses of central New York, against the red men and white who composed the force of Colonel Barry St. Leger, which body, delayed thereby a precious twenty days, had been unable to join Burgoyne for the decisive action at Saratoga. It was during this critical siege that a crude piece of tricolored patchwork, fashioned by the doughty garrison according to specifications adopted by the Continental Congress two months earlier, was flung to such breeze as offered, so that Colonel Gansevoort became the first American officer over whose command the Stars and Stripes was ever to wave.

Melville's paternal grandfather, Major Thomas Melvill (Herman's father Allan adopted the Melville spelling in early manhood) had borne a hand in the Boston Tea Party in 1773, served as a Boston port official for thirty-five years, and survived sturdily until 1832, holding fast to the three-cornered hat of his other century until the end. The hat made him a marked man, and the markings will last forever. For Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was twenty-three years old when Major Melvill died (the Major had been twenty-three himself at the pouring episode in the harbor), made a poem about him that delighted two such disparate characters as Abraham Lincoln and Edgar Allan Poe:

My grandmamma has said—
 Poor old lady, she is dead
 Long ago—
 That he had a Roman nose,
 And his cheek was like a rose
 In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
 And it rests upon his chin
 Like a staff,
 And a crook is in his back,
 And a melancholy crack
 In his laugh.

When Herman was eleven the family moved to Albany, where his father died two years later, leaving a widow and eight children. Herman had a little schooling, clerked in a bank and in his brother's hat shop, helped his Uncle Thomas run his farm in Pittsfield, fifty miles up in the Berkshires, and in 1837, when he was not quite eighteen, went to sea. Whether, in all technical strictness, he actually ran away to sea is still somewhat debatable.

He went to New York, shipped aboard the *Highlander*, and sailed early in June for Liverpool. The voyage took a month. There were six weeks in Liverpool, and in the fall of 1837 Melville was stretching his freshly acquired sea legs on Broadway. He did not reship—instead he went prosaically to teaching school for three years off and on in the neighborhood of Albany. But in 1841 anticlimax yielded to climax when, on January 3, Herman Melville sailed out of the port of New Bedford on board the whaler *Acushnet*, three hundred and fifty-nine tons, Captain Pease commanding.

The *Acushnet* dropped anchor in Buzzard's Bay again four years and four months later with a profitable cargo of sperm oil, whale oil, and whalebone. But Seaman Melville was not among those present. With Richard Tobias Greene (the Toby of *Typee*) he had abandoned ship when the *Acushnet* put in at the Marquesas, in Polynesia, in the summer of 1842.

The story of the remarkable events that followed is available in ample summary in Mr. Weaver's biography, in necessarily more compact form in the late John Freeman's study of Melville in the English Men of Letters Series, and *in extenso* in Melville's own *Typee*, *Omoo*, *White-Jacket* and, to a less extent, *Mardi*, just as the details of his earlier and less romantic odyssey may be gleaned from *Redburn*. He was home again in 1844, well ahead of the *Acushnet*. He rejoined his mother at Lansingburg, near Albany, and must have taken pen in hand almost as soon as hat went out of it. Before the winter of 1845 the manuscript of *Typee* was ready.

Typee was published in London and New York at about the

same time—Meade Minnegerode, in fact, in his bibliography of Melville, calls their appearance simultaneous. The original American edition certainly enjoys a higher collection prestige than the original English; it is much scarcer, for one thing—decidedly scarcer, indeed, than the masterpiece of five years later. But the first English edition can hardly be ignored, for several strong sentimental and practical reasons. Herman's older brother Gansevoort, setting out for London to be secretary to the American Legation, took the manuscript of *Typee* with him and had little difficulty in placing it with wise John Murray, who, once convinced it was a veracious narrative, bought the right to print a thousand copies for a hundred pounds. Mr. Weaver's thorough researches brought to light no proof that *Typee* had previously been offered to an American publisher. Mr. Minnegerode is even more strongly assertive in his statement that "the American rights were purchased by Wiley and Putnam, after John Murray had agreed to publish the book in England, so that to the London house . . . belongs the credit of having first recognized Melville."

Murray issued the book—it was Volume XV of his Colonial and Home Library—as *Narrative of a Four Months' Residence Among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands; or, A Peep at Polynesian Life*. The American edition of the same year (1846) was brought out by Wiley and Putnam as Numbers XIII and XIV of their Library of American Books, in which Poe and Hawthorne were already represented. A year later came *Omoo*, published by the Harpers in New York and by Murray in London, and in 1849 *Mardi*, published by the Harpers and Bentley. The same houses sponsored *Redburn* in 1849 and *White-Jacket* in 1850.

Obviously Melville had put in a busy six years after his return to home soil. He had found time, too, for other activities than authorship. *Typee* had carried a dedication to Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw of Massachusetts, an old family friend; in the summer of 1847 Melville married the justice's daughter Elizabeth. Soon afterward they moved to New York. In the fall of

1849 Melville went to England on publishing business—his first ocean voyage as a passenger—and, after attending to his affairs and making a first and hurried trip to the Continent, was back in New York in February, 1850. In the summer of that year he boarded in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and in October he bought a farm there.

A few months earlier Nathaniel Hawthorne, in the flush of success that followed the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, had gone to live in Lenox, a few miles south. Hawthorne's literary career dated back some twenty-five years, to the disowned *Fanshawe* and beyond, Melville's a fourth as far—but Hawthorne was fifteen years older than Melville. They met under mildly romantic circumstances. Hawthorne himself recorded the bare fact under date of August 5, 1850, in the journal that was later published as *Passages from the American Note-Books*:

"Drove with James T. Fields and his wife to Stockbridge, being thereto invited by Mr. Dudley Field of Stockbridge, in order to ascend Monument Mountain. Found at Mr. Field's Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mr. Evert Duyckinck of New York; also Mr. Cornelius Matthews and Herman Melville. Ascended the mountain: that is to say, Mrs. Fields and Miss Jennie Field, Mr. Field and Mr. Fields, Dr. Holmes, Messrs. Duyckinck, Matthews, Melville, Mr. Henry Sedgwick, and I, and were caught in a shower. Dined at Mr. Field's. Afternoon, under guidance of J. T. Headley, the party scrambled through the ice-glen."

Fields, in *Yesterdays With Authors*, recalls that Melville "bestrode a peaked rock, which ran out like a bowsprit, and pulled and hauled imaginary ropes for our delectation. Then we all assembled in a shady spot, and one of the party read to us Bryant's beautiful poem commemorating Monument Mountain. Then we lunched among the rocks, and somebody proposed Bryant's health, and 'long life to the dear old poet.' This was the most popular toast of the day, and it took, I remember, a considerable quantity of Heidsieck to do it justice."

A more significant delineation of the incident is to be found

in J. E. A. Smith's *The Poet Among the Hills*, published at Pittsfield in 1895, which, while it places its main accent on Oliver Wendell Holmes, offers an abundance of side lights on Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Melville, among others:

"Melville had written for the *New York Literary World*, edited by his friends the brothers Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, a most appreciative and singularly sympathetic review of 'The Scarlet Letter'. This article was not only appreciative of, but appreciated by, Hawthorne. Yet when the two authors came to be neighbors, as neighborhood is reckoned in the country, there was at first a certain shyness in their intercourse; probably from the fear of each lest he should seem to the other to presume too much upon what he had said and done, it was a sensitiveness natural to the pride of genius; but so shadowy and irksome a barrier could not long keep apart men so formed for fellowship. It was broken down during an excursion when the two were driven by a sudden, severe, and prolonged summer shower to take refuge together in a narrow recess on the west side of Bryant's Monument Mountain. There, undisturbed by the tumult of the elements, the two great original thinkers and writers, neither of them 'made altogether by the common pattern,' learned to know each other, mind to mind and heart to heart. Thenceforward their friendship was that of kindred though diverse intellects; and of faith and feeling in which they were not diverse."

Two days after this historic retreat Hawthorne wrote his old Bowdoin friend, Horatio Bridge: "Duyckinck, of the *Literary World*, and Herman Melville are in Berkshire, and I expect them to call here this morning. I met Melville the other day, and liked him so much that I have asked him to spend a few days with me before leaving these parts." Melville kept the appointment, as Hawthorne's journal entry for the same day records: "Messrs. Duyckinck, Matthews, Melville, and Melville, Junior, called in the forenoon. Gave them a couple of bottles of Mr. Mansfield's champagne, and walked down to the lake with them." (Melville, Junior, was Malcolm Melville, aged

eighteen months, who, it may be assumed, did not share in the wassail.) Visits back and forth became frequent; a few months later (on January 12, 1851) Mrs. Hawthorne set down in her own notes the fact that "at dusk arrived Herman Melville from Pittsfield. He was entertained with champagne foam, manufactured of beaten eggs, loaf sugar, and champagne."

But these mid-century days in Berkshire were not all mountain rambles and champagne foam. Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, in her *Memories of Hawthorne*, quotes a remarkable letter from Melville to her father (written probably in August, 1851) which contains the following significant passage:

"People think that if a man has undergone a hardship, he should have a reward; but for my part, if I have done the hardest possible day's work, and then come to sit down in a corner and eat my supper comfortably—why, then I don't think I deserve any reward for my hard day's work—for am I not now at peace? Is not my supper good? My peace and my supper are my reward, my dear Hawthorne. So your joy-giving and exultation-giving letter is not my reward for my ditcher's work with that book, but is the good goddess's bonus over and above what was stipulated for—for not one man in five cycles, who is wise, will expect appreciative recognition from his fellows, or any one of them. Appreciation! Recognition! Is love appreciated? Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of his great allegory—the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill comprehended. I say your appreciation is my glorious gratuity. In my proud, humble way—a shepherd-king,—I was lord of a little vale in the solitary Crimea; but you have now given me the crown of India. But on trying it on my head, I found it fell down on my ears, notwithstanding their asinine length—for it's only such ears that sustain such crowns."

Another passage toward the end of this long communication may be cited as enduring proof of the depth of Melville's devotion to his friend and counselor:

"Lord, when shall we be done growing? As long as we have anything more to do, we have done nothing. So, now, let us

add *Moby Dick* to our blessing, and step from that. . . . This is a long letter, but you are not at all bound to answer it. Possibly, if you do answer it, and direct it to Herman Melville, you will missend it—for the very fingers that now guide this pen are not precisely the same that just took it up and put it on this paper. Lord, when shall we be done changing? Ah! it's a long stage, and no inn in sight, and night coming, and the body cold. But with you for a passenger, I am content and can be happy. I shall leave the world, I feel, with more satisfaction for having come to know you. Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible of our immortality."

Small wonder that when *Moby-Dick* made its bow that autumn it carried the dedication: "In token of my admiration for his genius, this book is inscribed to Nathaniel Hawthorne."

§3. *Moby-Dick*, greatest of sea stories, was written seventy-five miles from salt water and a third of a mile above sea level. Its composition required but a few months; Melville, as may be guessed from the census of his earlier productions given above, wrote at white heat and top speed. The fact is all the more marvelous when one considers the matter of *Moby-Dick* itself. It is a veritable concordance of whaling, a monument of cetaceous erudition. Much remains to be written of Melville, and not the least interesting product of such research will be a bibliography of the authorities cited and quoted in *Moby-Dick*, of whom a partial list is immediately available in the "Extracts (Supplied by a Sub-Sub-Librarian)" which preface the text of the story.

The book appeared in October, 1851—as the traditional three-decker in London at the traditional three-decker price of thirty-one shillings and sixpence, in a single thick volume of nearly six hundred and fifty pages in New York (where the lending libraries did not have a strangle hold on the fiction market) at the rather less prohibitive figure of one dollar and a half. It was a lot of book for the money. Both of Melville's bibliographers, Mr. Minnegerode and Michael Sadleir, assign priority to the London edition, which consisted of five hundred copies.

The size of the New York edition is not known—it probably numbered not fewer than a thousand copies, perhaps two thousand. In London the book was called *The Whale*, but the half-title of Volume I (the only volume to carry a half-title) read “The Whale or Moby-Dick”; the title-page was embellished with a quotation from *Paradise Lost* which was not present in the American edition. The London edition, moreover, was elaborately edited, and omitted no fewer than thirty-five passages of varying length which have uniformly been present in American editions.

Richard Curle has advanced the view (in *Collecting American First Editions*) that Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* is, “with the possible exception of Melville's ‘Moby-Dick,’ . . . about the ugliest-looking book that that period, which delighted in ugly books, managed to produce.” The palm, in the present commentator's judgment, should readily be awarded *The Autocrat*. An attempt was made to dress up *The Autocrat*, to its eternal ruination. No effort was put forth to alleviate the stark external ruggedness of *Moby-Dick*. It was an edifice rather than a book, a Cyclopean *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*, but no one was trying to make it anything other than that. By accident, probably rather than by intent, it was itself very like a whale.

The only concession to decoration which its publishers accorded it was the variety of color in the cloth binding, but this touch of grace, alas, had its roots in the sordid desire to sell more books. Mr. Minnegerode specifies pale blue cloth, Mr. Sadleir slate-blue or scarlet, Mr. Curle blue, red, black, or gray-green. “Collectors,” says Mr. Sadleir, “should observe the fact that it was the custom of American publishers in the 'fifties and 'sixties to bind one edition in cloths of various colors for the purposes of window display. Consequently Melville's first American editions are met with in a variety of colourings which, in the matter of date of issue, rank equally.” The practice, in fact, continued until well into the 'eighties.

The text of the New York edition is followed by six pages of

advertisements, one each devoted to extracts from reviews of *White-Jacket*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, *Typee*, and *Redburn*, and the last to other Harper publications. The Harpers had originally brought out all these titles except *Typee*, the rights to which they acquired in 1849.

Evidence tending to show that it was the original intention of Melville or of his publishers (or of both) to call the American edition "The Whale" is offered in the issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (it really was new then, having been initiated in June, 1850) for October, 1851. In that issue was published (pages 658-665) "The Town-Ho's Story. By Herman Melville." The use of the by-line was unusual in that era sacred to periodical anonymity—only three other contributions of the twenty that made up the contents of the issue were signed. The Melville story—it is Chapter LIV of *Moby-Dick*, and was the only portion of *Moby-Dick* to appear serially—was probably used, and probably credited to Melville, as a legitimate advertising device, since an asterisk beside the title drew the eye to this significant footnote: "From 'THE WHALE.' The title of a new novel by Mr. Melville, in the press of Harper and Brothers, and now publishing in London by Mr. Bentley."

Moby-Dick himself was not at all an allegory, or at any rate, whether he actually existed in the ponderous flesh or not, a thousand forecastles believed in him as literally as they did in Adam and Eve. In the *Knickerbocker Magazine* for May, 1829, had appeared "Mocha Dick: or The White Whale of the Pacific: A Leaf from a Manuscript Journal," over the signature of J. N. Reynolds, whose *Voyage of the U. S. Frigate Potomac Around the Globe, 1831-34* (1835) had become one of the most popular maritime narratives of the day. Mocha Dick, according to Reynolds, was "an old bull whale, of prodigious size and strength. From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature, as exhibited in the case of the Ethiopian Albino, a singular consequence had resulted—he was white as wool!" Reynolds could not learn when his history began, but "it is settled," he declared, "that previous to the year 1810, he had

been seen and attacked near the island of Mocha," just off the Chilean coast some four hundred miles south of Valparaiso.

"Numerous boats," continues the Reynolds account, "are known to have been shattered by his immense flukes, or ground to pieces in the crush of his powerful jaws; and, on one occasion, it is said that he came off victorious from a conflict with the crews of three English whalers, striking fiercely at the last of the retreating boats at the moment it was rising from the water, in its hoist up to the ship's davits. It must not be supposed, howbeit, that through all this desperate warfare, our leviathan passed scathless. A back serried with irons, and from fifty to a hundred yards of line trailing in his wake, sufficiently attested, that though unconquered, he had not proved invulnerable. From the period of Dick's first appearance, his celebrity continued to increase, until his name seemed naturally to mingle with the salutations which whalemens were in the habit of exchanging, in their encounters upon the broad Pacific; the customary interrogatories almost always closing with, 'Any news from Mocha Dick?' Indeed, nearly every whaling captain who rounded Cape Horn, if he possessed any professional ambition, or valued himself on his skill in subduing the monarch of the seas, would lay his vessel along the coast, in the hope of having an opportunity to try the muscle of this doughty champion, who was never known to shun his assailants."

In the spirited Reynolds narrative, which is some nine thousand words in length, Mocha Dick is finally brought alongside. "He measured more than seventy feet from his noddle to the tips of his flukes; and yielded one hundred barrels of clear oil, with a proportionate quantity of 'head-matter.'"

In the tragedy which befell the *Essex* of Nantucket Melville had a parallel for the fictional destruction of the *Pequod*, and *Moby-Dick* was barely published before word reached New York of the loss of the *Ann Alexander* of New Bedford through the fury of a great whale which pursued and attacked the ship whose crew had tried to conquer him. The ramming of the *Ann Alexander* had occurred the preceding August; Melville heard

of it the November following the appearance of *Moby-Dick* in a letter from Evert Duyckinck of the *Literary World*, which printed a detailed account of the episode. "It is really and truly a surprising coincidence," wrote Melville to Duyckinck in a letter reproduced by Mr. Minnegerode. "I make no doubt it is *Moby-Dick* himself, for there is no account of his capture after the sad fate of the Pequod fourteen years ago—Ye Gods! What a Commentator is this Ann Alexander whale. What he has to say is short and pithy but very much to the point. I wonder if my evil art has raised this monster."

§4. *Moby-Dick* was not a success. None of Melville's earlier productions had set him on the road to affluence—*Typee* seems to have done better than any of the others, and *Moby-Dick* apparently worse than any that had intervened. It is quite likely that the Harper fire of 1853 mercifully saved it from being remaindered—and *Moby-Dick* was more than two years old when the fire occurred. Somehow, according to Mr. Weaver, although two hundred and ninety-seven copies fell a prey to the plumber's supposititious craving for tobacco, some sixty copies were rescued. The Harpers, inspecting their stockroom in the years that followed, must have glanced mournfully at the slowly dwindling pile of *Moby-Dicks* and asked why the fire gods could not have spared some more electric seller. For according to Mr. Minnegerode *Moby-Dick* was not reprinted until 1863, so that the surviving copies of the first edition must have been parceled out at an average of six a year, at which rate there is little percentage in bookselling. The 1863 reprint seems to have done little better, for *Moby-Dick* was not again reissued until 1892, the year after Melville's death. There was no edition in England following the original appearance of *The Whale* until 1901.

Melville's subsequent books did little better than *Moby-Dick*. The first printing of *Pierre*, which appeared almost exactly a year later, contrived to become exhausted within four years (thanks in part to the Harper fire), and a second edition was issued in 1855. *Israel Potter* (1855) won the unusual tribute of theft at the hands of a Philadelphia publisher under the title

of *The Refugee*, with the dedication, "To His Highness the Bunker Hill Monument;" omitted as being perhaps too facetious for Philadelphia. *The Piazza-Tales* (1856), *The Confidence-Man* (1857), *Battle-Pieces* (1866), and *Clarel* (1876) were not reprinted in Melville's lifetime. *John Marr* (1888) and *Timoleon* (1891) appeared in privately printed editions of twenty-five copies each, to the everlasting distress of the twenty-sixth Melville collector. "Melville," declares Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach (whose private collection includes the dedication copy to Hawthorne) in *An Introduction to Moby-Dick*, "had summed up all his philosophy, all his beliefs, even his aspirations, in *Moby-Dick*. After that great performance there was nothing more to do. 'Old Age is always wakeful,' he states. In this last phase, after *Moby-Dick*, he was still wakeful, but he had lost the art of transmitting concretely, indelibly, to others the magic of his mind. The author Herman Melville had perhaps been overwhelmed by a mighty Frankenstein, represented in the *Moby-Dick* that he himself had created."

Yet Melville's fame was not in utter eclipse during the forty years that intervened between the publication of *Moby-Dick* and his death in the fall of 1891. The assertion that Britannia rules the waves has lent acceptance to the false corollary that only Britons write good sea stories. Yet an English writer whose testimony can hardly be called inexpert—W. Clark Russell, to whom Melville dedicated *John Marr*—in surveying the domain of maritime literature before he himself went "afloat in imagination," summarized his conclusions thus: "Only two writers had dealt with the mercantile side of the ocean life—Dana, the author of *Two Years Before the Mast*, and Herman Melville, both of them, it is needless to say, Americans. I could not recollect a book, written by an Englishman, relating, as a work of fiction, to shipboard life on the high seas under the flag of the Merchant Service. I excluded the *Writer for Boys*"—the capitals are an indication of a revulsion which Russell rationalizes with deep sarcasm and indignation. In a letter written in 1908, a few years before his death, Russell saw little reason to revise

his opinion. He alluded to "the singular and the original merits of certain great American sea novelists, including R. H. Dana and Herman Melville; and to the importance of Hakluyt, Purchas, Dampier, Cowley, Shelvocke, Woodes-Rogers and others, all of whom are neglected by writers who deal with the sea story in favour of a few moderns such as Marryat, Fenimore Cooper, and some middling writers of today."

§5. The question whether *Moby-Dick* is merely a glorious if diffuse panorama of a romantic industry—a literal, straightforward narrative of the sea—or an allegory scaled to an epic vastness that makes it comparable to *Paradise Lost* and more than comparable to such an unadorned tale as *The Pilgrim's Progress* was settled once and for all in a remarkable letter which Melville addressed to Mrs. Hawthorne on January 8, 1852, not many weeks after the book's appearance. Mrs. Hawthorne had evidently greeted it with high and understanding praise—her letter has apparently not been preserved, nor has any letter to Melville from Hawthorne himself. Melville wrote:

"It really amazed me that you should find any satisfaction in that book. It is true that some *men* have said they were pleased with it, but you are the only *woman*. . . . But, then, since you, with your spiritualizing nature, see more things than other people, and by the same process, refine all you see, so that they are not the same things that other people see, but things, which while you think you but humbly discover them, you do in fact create them for yourself—therefore, upon the whole, I do not so much marvel at your expressions concerning Moby Dick. At any rate, your allusion for example to the 'Spirit Spout' [Chapter LI] first showed to me that there was a subtle significance in that thing—but I did not, in that case, mean it. I had some vague idea while writing it, that the whole book was susceptible of an allegorical construction, & also that parts of it were—but the speciality of many of the particular subordinate allegories were [*sic*] first revealed to me after reading Mr. Hawthorne's letter, which, without citing any particular examples, yet intimated the part-&-parcel allegoricalness of the whole."

For two months now the Hawthornes had been living in West Newton, later moving to Concord, and Mr. Weaver finds no record of a meeting between Melville and Hawthorne after their work- and play-days in Berkshire until November, 1856, when Melville, bound for the Holy Land, called on Consul Hawthorne at Liverpool. Melville's accounts of their colloquies are the characteristically telegraphic entries of a foot-loose traveler. Hawthorne, enjoying the advantages of staying put, is rather more detailed in his own journal, but hardly voluble. The fine, productive friendship petered out in an anticlimax of casual glosses in two diaries—or did it not? Mr. Weaver is convinced that it did:

"From the beginning, there had been, between Melville and Hawthorne, a profound incompatibility. When they met, Melville was within one last step of absolute disenchantment. One illusion, only, was to him still unblasted: The belief in the possibility of a Utopian friendship that might solace all of his earlier defeats. Ravished in solitude by his alienation from his fellows, Melville discovered that the author of 'The Scarlet Letter' was his neighbor. He came to know Hawthorne: and his eager soul rushed to embrace Hawthorne's as that of a brother in despair. Exultant was his worship of Hawthorne, absolute his desire for surrender. He craved of Hawthorne an understanding and sympathy that neither Hawthorne, nor any other human being, perhaps, could ever have given. His admiration for Hawthorne was, of course, built upon a mistaken identity. Yet, on the evidence of his letters, he for a time drew from this admiration moments both of tensest excitement and of miraculous and impregnating peace. It would be interesting, indeed, to know what 'Moby-Dick' owed to this inspiration."

Possibly incompatibility was to blame—possibly merely geography. The picture, as Mr. Weaver paints it, would serve almost equally well for a portrait of Hawthorne—of that Hawthorne who at thirty-two (the age at which Melville produced *Moby-Dick*) had yet to publish *Twice-Told Tales*, the recluse of

"the chamber under the eaves," the Salem solitary who had no Melville to whom to unbosom himself, and who, had he found one and made him his spiritual and intellectual confidant, might have been forever abashed by that one rhapsodic sortie from the shell of his reserve.

The Melville renaissance did not dawn until after the World War, and it is only in the interval since the Armistice that *Moby-Dick* has come into its own in the eye of reader and collector alike. Some of the *réclame* that has accrued to *Moby-Dick* is due also to the now pretty general realization of the fact that with the possible exception of piracy (which, thank Heaven, was practiced largely by foreigners), whaling, in the view of everyone but whalers, is in perspective the most romantic calling in which an American has ever participated. A more specific reason is the growing bulk of Melville biographical and critical studies. The sumptuous investiture of the Lakeside Press three-volume edition of 1930, with illustrations by Rockwell Kent, is significant testimony to the latter-day appraisal of the grandeur and durability of Melville's handiwork.

Immortality, like whaling, is a tedious business.

The Luck of Roaring Camp

IT WAS KNOWN that mines of the precious metals existed to a considerable extent in California at the time of its acquisition," declared the President's message. "Recent discoveries render it probable that these mines are more extensive and valuable than was anticipated."

The very personification of cautious understatement, James Knox Polk was not the man to give way to superlatives even in the face of the most extraordinary treasure-trove of the era. Two days after his address to Congress of December 5, 1848, he recorded in his diary (in the presence of which alone he was loquacious): "The Secretary of War [William L. Marcy, of New York] called and exhibited to me specimens of California gold which had been sent to him by Col. Mason, commanding the U. S. troops in California."

Henry Hart, of the teaching staff of the Albany (New York) Female Seminary, had been three years dead when President Polk prepared the document that gave the first great afflatus of publicity to James Wilson Marshall's momentous discovery. Now it is only by the most roundabout reasoning—from the thesis that he did not prevent the war with Mexico—that Polk can be credited with having had anything at all to do with this suddenly assumed commercial importance of California. Still, it was a pleasant thing to have happen under his administration, and that undeniable truth alone would have upset a bitter cup of anguish in the breast of Henry Hart. In the vigorous campaign of 1844, wherein Henry Clay missed election by a hair's breadth (and may not, in strict fact, have missed it at all), Hart had thrown himself into the battle for Clay with a zeal

that is wholly absent from politics in these degenerate days, and was not common at so high a pitch even then. There were, indeed, two Henry Harts in the local forensic field, and to avoid confusion one of them (the only one who matters in the present narrative) added an *e* to his name.

Henry Hart's mother, before her marriage, had been Catherine Brett. Henry Hart's younger son, by every tenet of genealogy and orthography, should have come down to history as Francis Brett Hart. But Frank (as he was first called) chose to drop a *t* from his middle name, just as his father had chosen to tack an *e* on his surname—chose, also, to reduce the Francis to F. and finally to drop it altogether. He might have won fame as Frank Hart, as Brett Hart, or in any one of a dozen other permutations. He preferred Bret Harte, and Destiny did not deny him his whim.

Francis Bret Harte was born in Albany on August 25, 1836. On that very day the ship *Alert* was well north of the equator, homeward bound from the Pacific Coast for Boston, carrying among her crew Richard Henry Dana, Jr., whose *Two Years Before the Mast*, to be published four years later, would become the most widely read chronicle of California fact, as young Harte's stories would one day become the most widely read chronicle of California fiction. The Harte ménage was a mobile affair: before the father died, in Frank's tenth year, the family had lived in Hudson, a few miles below Albany; in New Brunswick, New Jersey; and in Philadelphia, Providence, Lowell, and Boston. After Henry Harte's death the widow, with her two sons and two daughters, went to live in New York and Brooklyn. Frank's older brother Henry at sixteen had copied Dana and gone to California by way of the Horn; in 1853 Mrs. Harte followed; and the next year Frank, not yet eighteen, and his sister Margaret (Eliza was three years married) followed their mother by the elegant and expensive Nicaragua route.

Meanwhile Mrs. Harte had remarried. It is unfortunate for romance that Bret Harte did not go to California by covered

wagon; it is equally unfortunate that he did not have a cruel stepfather. (It is, of course, possible to argue that stepfathers are rarely cruel to stepsons who are eighteen years old.) Colonel Andrew Williams was a gentleman and a scholar—he had been graduated from Union College the year before Henry Harte, and he had visited Europe. In 1857 he would become the first mayor of Oakland, California, and Henry C. Merwin, in his biography of Bret Harte, credits the colonel with having built one of the first houses in that enterprising community (if not the very first) “in which laths and plaster were used.”

Young Harte worked at various odds and ends of jobs—teaching, tutoring, clerking in an apothecary shop, as express messenger, and as printer. Before the end of 1857 he was in San Francisco, a compositor for the *Golden Era*, a weekly newspaper which, like Francis Bacon, took all knowledge for its province, being “devoted to literature, agriculture, the mining interest, local and foreign intelligence, commerce, education, science, and the fine arts.” J. Macdonough Foard, founder of the *Era*, has recorded that “Bret Harte was not much of a compositor,” and adds: “Occasionally he gave me a little sketch or poem to help out, which I put in unknown to the rest of the management. After a while they would say, ‘That’s a rather nice little thing. Whose is it?’ And I would say, ‘Oh, I got it out of the box.’ After a time he did so well that we took him on the staff.”

At twenty-one, then, Bret Harte became a professional writer, and a professional writer he remained until his death forty-five years later. Fame, however, was still half a generation distant. Its first faint trumpetings began to sound in 1868 with the appearance, in July, of the first number of the *Overland Monthly*.

The *Overland* was the glorious ghost of the *Californian*, the staff of which Harte joined in 1864, remaining with it during its life of three years. It was in the columns of the *Californian* that Mark Twain’s account of *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* first appeared, which narrative, as Harte wrote later, “crossed the Rockies for an Eastern reading” and “is now known and laughed over, I suppose, wherever the Eng-

lish tongue is spoken." The *Californian* collapsed, as better and worse periodicals have done, and out of the ruins sprang the *Overland*, with Bret Harte as editor.

Harte was already more than a casual writer of local ephemera. In 1867 he had published a book of poems, *The Lost Galleon and Other Tales*, bearing the imprint of Towne and Bacon of San Francisco, and four years earlier he, too, had crossed the Rockies with a story—*The Legend of Monte del Diablo*, in the *Atlantic Monthly*. And in the same year in which *The Lost Galleon* had appeared on one side of the continent, his *Condensed Novels*, which had been inaugurated in the *Golden Era*, were assembled into a book in New York.

The editor's only contribution to the first number of the *Overland* was a poem, *San Francisco: From the Sea*, which the author liked well enough to use to introduce his *Poems* four years later. To the second number he contributed another poem, *To a Sea-Bird* (also to be included in the *Poems*), and a short story. The story was called *The Luck of Roaring Camp*.

§2. "There was commotion in Roaring Camp"—and simultaneously there was commotion of another sort in the office of the *Overland Monthly*. The incident can best be recounted in Bret Harte's own words:

"When the first number of the *Overland Monthly* appeared the author, then its editor, called the publisher's attention to the lack of any distinctively Californian romance in its pages, and averred that, should no other contribution come in, he himself would supply the omission in the next number. No other contribution was offered, and the author, having the plot and the general idea in his mind, in a few days sent the manuscript of 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' to the printer. He had not yet received the proof-sheets when he was suddenly summoned to the office of the publisher, whom he found standing, the picture of dismay and anxiety, with the proof before him. The indignation and stupefaction of the author can be well understood when he was told that the printer, instead of returning the proofs to him, had submitted them to the pub-

lisher, with the emphatic declaration that the matter there was so indecent, irreligious, and improper that his proof-reader—a young lady—had with difficulty been induced to continue its perusal, and that he, as a friend of the publisher, and a well-wisher of the magazine, was impelled to present to him personally this shameless evidence of the manner in which the editor was imperilling the future usefulness of that enterprise."

The publisher, Anton Roman, was inclined to agree with the self-appointed censor-printer and the pre-Freudian young lady. It was finally decided to call in "three gentlemen of culture and experience, friends of publisher and author;" but the committee, though struggling dutifully, was unable to "come to any clear decision." Harte continues:

"It was, however, suggested to the author that, assuming the natural hypothesis that his editorial reasoning might be warped by his literary predilections in a consideration of one of his own productions, a personal sacrifice would at this juncture be in the last degree heroic. This last suggestion had the effect of ending all further discussion, for he at once informed the publisher that the question of the propriety of the story was no longer at issue; the only question was of his capacity to exercise the proper editorial judgment, and that unless he was permitted to test that capacity by the publication of the story, and abide squarely by the result, he must resign his editorial position."

It is to the eternal credit of Anton Roman that he let Harte carry the day. It is interesting to speculate upon what might have happened had he decided otherwise. Would Harte's stories have won their way into periodical print elsewhere—invariably in the East? Undoubtedly yes, as the sequel tends to demonstrate. He would have achieved a like destination, but by a detour. It is interesting to note, however, that, for whatever reason, no stories by Bret Harte appeared in the four remaining numbers of Volume I of the *Overland*. With Volume II the vein was reopened with *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*—whether sundry objectionable characters in the story precipitated another spasm in the bosom of the decorous proofreading young lady is no-

where stated. Subsequent numbers contained a greater bulk of the editor's stories and poems; in the issue of March, 1870, was published *Brown of Calaveras*, of high bibliographical import; six months later appeared *Plain Language from Truthful James*, which all good Harteians recite every August third to all who will listen.

The Luck of Roaring Camp, meanwhile, had traveled as far and as fast as *The Celebrated Jumping Frog* had done earlier. It came to the notice of Fields, Osgood, & Co. of Boston, publishers not alone of books but also of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Did Mr. Harte have more like *The Luck*, for the *Atlantic*?

Eventually Harte signed a contract with the *Atlantic* of which something more will be said. For the moment Fields, Osgood, & Co. would have to be content with a book—they had, in fact, followed their first letter regarding *Atlantic* stories with a second which embodied just that suggestion. Harte replied on April 23, 1869 (as given in his *Letters*, Boston, 1926):

"In regard to your proposal to examine a collection of my California sketches, with a view to republication, I fear that you have overestimated the number of my contributions to the *Overland*." He then listed material published or projected, but expressed the fear that "these . . . would not make a volume of the size suggested."

Evidently the publishers did not at first share his fears. They started work on the book. Soon, however, they seem to have come to the same conclusion—that the amount of material available for *The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches* was hardly sufficient to warrant the rather ambitious selling price of a dollar and a half. At any rate, on January 21, 1870, Harte wrote them: "In collecting material for the projected volume I was conscious that the shorter pieces did not adjust themselves to the rest of the contents, either in subject or manner. But you asked for a certain no. of pages, and I had to fill it up. We may get over the difficulty by supplanting them with another story wh. I am writing for the O M—to be published in March." The other story was *Brown of Calaveras*. Fields, Os-



SAN FRANCISCO'S FIRST POST OFFICE

From a lithograph (1850 or 1851) in the collection of the New York Historical Society

good evidently told him to send it on—it was incorporated in the book, which, previously containing only 239 pages of text, was thus swelled to 256.

According to Henry C. Merwin, only thirty-five hundred copies of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* were sold within the first six months of its publication. How many of these were of the first issue there is no way of knowing—almost certainly fewer than a thousand, inferentially far fewer, to judge by the relative commonness of the second issue, containing *Brown of Calaveras*, as compared with the first.

The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches first appeared as a pocket-size volume of most unassuming aspect. There were no illustrations and there was no attempt at embellishment apart from a chaste arrangement of blind-stamped rules on front and back covers. The contents was divided into three groups: *Sketches*, *Stories*, and *Bohemian Papers*—there were eight of the first, three of the second, and four of the third. The distinction between a sketch and a story, apparently, was that a sketch was only about half as long as a story, for the sketches averaged fifteen pages and the stories (of which the longest, divided into four chapters, was *Miss*) thirty-one. There was a two-page preface (dated at San Francisco, December 24, 1869) in which the thirty-three-year-old author outlined the philosophy of the collection with a critical accuracy that time has not gainsaid:

“I trust that in the following sketches I have abstained from any positive moral. I might have painted my villains of the blackest dye,—so black, indeed, that the originals thereof would have contemplated them with the glow of comparative virtue. I might have made it impossible for them to have performed a virtuous or generous action, and have thus avoided that moral confusion which is apt to arise in the contemplation of mixed motives and qualities. But I should have burdened myself with the responsibility of their creation, which, as a humble writer of romance and entitled to no particular reverence, I did not care to do.

"I fear I cannot claim, therefore, any higher motive than to illustrate an era of which Californian history has preserved the incidents more often than the character of the actors,—an era which the panegyrist was too often content to bridge over with a general compliment to its survivors,—an era still so recent that in attempting to revive its poetry, I am conscious also of awakening the more prosaic recollections of these same survivors,—and yet an era replete with a certain heroic Greek poetry, of which perhaps none were more unconscious than the heroes themselves. And I shall be quite content to have collected here merely the materials for the Iliad that is yet to be sung"

It is significant that the author's name was given in full—Francis Bret Harte—on the title-page and reduced on the shelf-back to F. B. Harte.

Harte came east in February, 1871, with his fame already secure, not so much as a result of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* as because of a poem that everybody was quoting to everybody else. It was called, by Harte at least, on its original *Overland* appearance, as has been noted, *Plain Language from Truthful James*, but people began to call it *The Heathen Chinee*, and so many millions of Americans and Englishmen have been calling it that ever since that the truth cannot hope to catch up. Fields, Osgood brought out a volume of Harte's *Poems* in 1871, just before the firm name was altered to James R. Osgood & Co., and the Fields, Osgood imprint denotes the first issue—there are other identification marks, but this one is sufficient. The *Poems* carried, in lieu of half-title, a notice of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* from the *New York Tribune*.

Harte's contract with the *Atlantic Monthly* allowed him the then truly magnificent annual fee of ten thousand dollars, regardless of how much or how little he wrote. He has been charged with falling idly back on his laurels the instant the contract was signed, but both Mr. Merwin in his biography and Geoffrey Bret Harte, in his compilation of his grandfather's letters, prove conclusively that he gave value for the

money so far at least as bulk was concerned—as, indeed, a casual inspection of the *Atlantic* files bears out. For the rest of his life, during the long years abroad as consul or literary lion, or both together, he had no difficulty in marketing his product. The California background panned out to the very end, though even his most enthusiastic admirer—the enthusiastic admirer more than any other, perhaps—will admit that the largest nuggets were unearthed on the spot, and that nowhere in his productive aftermath did he approach the distillation of the spirit of the California pioneer that made *The Luck of Roaring Camp* a *tour de force* in the interpretation of a romantic moment in the chronicle of America.

§3. The enthusiasm with which the England of the 1870's hailed the appearance of this new and effulgent Star of the Uttermost West is worth detailed consideration both for its technical bibliographic interest and for its deep-reaching social and cultural significance. Ever since the days of Irving and Cooper, England had been alert to the growth of a native literature in America, generally expressing its appreciation by the unequivocal testimonial of wholesale piracy. As America was simultaneously paying a like compliment to popular English writers it is perhaps just as well to pass lightly over the ethical aspect of the business, since the evil had probably struck something like a balance by the time international copyright progress put it in the category of unsafe risks.

Moreover, some good came of it at last. Few Americans and few Englishmen knew enough about the inner secrets of publishing to be conscious of the fact that they were receiving stolen goods; they read and admired in all innocence, and reputations were made in a night, particularly in England, that might have had to wait long for their burgeoning had they been left in the care of a single legitimate sponsor. Harriet Beecher Stowe found an authorized publisher in London for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but a score who were not authorized were in the field earlier, and the wide dissemination of their loot may have made things easier for her brother Henry a dozen years later.

Most picturesque, probably most capable, and certainly most enterprising among Victorian literary pirates on either side of the Atlantic was John Camden Hotten. Hotten, born in 1832, had traveled to America when he was eighteen and spent eight years there before he returned to London with his ability to recognize a joke undimmed by association with that uncouth peasantry whose goings on had so ruffled the esthetic feathers of Charles Dickens. Hotten wrote, compiled, edited, as well as published. He appears to have been the inventor of the omnibus book, for his *Yankee Drolleries*, of seven hundred pages, selling for three shillings and sixpence, was followed in 1869 by *More Yankee Drolleries*, of like amplitude. Within the bulging covers of these anthologies James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Artemus Ward, Charles Godfrey Leland, Josh Billings, Orpheus C. Kerr, Major Jack Downing, and Petroleum V. Nasby bore the banner of laughter into thousands of English homes not to their own direct profit. Mark Twain appeared and was duly appropriated, and a few months later, in a more dazzling access of fame, Bret Harte. Hotten seized the poems and *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, the latter early enough to reprint the first issue, lacking *Brown of Calaveras*. He brought out the poems (under a title of his own choosing, *That Heathen Chinee and Other Poems Mostly Humorous*); he picked *Lothaw* from the *Condensed Novels* (which had already suffered piracy at home) and issued it as a separate pamphlet, publishing the remaining parodies as *Sensation Novels*; he published *East and West Poems* in 1871, the year of its original Boston appearance, as *East and West*. Hotten's death in 1873 probably aided the cause of international amity, but it removed much potentiality for excitement from the publishing panorama.

Subsequently the firm of George Routledge and Sons issued *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in an edition which contained *Brown of Calaveras* (a fact duly noted, presumably as a slap at Hotten) as well as an introduction and glossary by Tom Hood, son of the author of *The Song of the Shirt*. The glossary pro-

vides no inaccurate standard for the measuring of Harte's transatlantic popularity, for he had discovered not alone a new corner of the world but also a new language with it, and one which English readers found the greatest phonetic novelty since the rise of Hosea Biglow. "Gambling," declared Hood, "with its two chief games at cards, 'Euchre,' which is a sort of Piquet, and 'Poker,' which is a sort of Brag (not to name Ronda, a sort of roulette), supplies much Californese. In the latter game, the covering of the last player's stake throws a light upon the motive of the gentleman who 'saw the pin, and went two diamonds better,' as it also explains how a street in Roaring Camp could 'lay over,' *i.e.*, cover, a street in Red Dog."

The English reader learned further that "a 'Grocery' in America does not confine itself to tea, but combines a bar with a counter, as a rule, especially when it is a 'corner grocery.' A 'stated preacher' is the regularly appointed minister, as distinguished from irregular and unordained holders-forth. Saleratus is 'digger' for 'Sal aëratus,' a preparation of soda, used in lieu of yeast for the saving of time in baking, and seemingly also employed in the teapot to soften the spring-water of the mines. . . . Thanks to the notorious Fisk and his doings, few will need to be told the meaning of a 'Ring' in politics or finance. Thence comes the verb; and when Roaring Camp thought Red Dog, if entrusted with the baby, would 'ring in somebody else upon it,' it meant, 'would by combination and fraud impose somebody else upon it.'"

Occasionally Hood's etymology went askew: "The Pacific railway has abolished the mule, but it was preceded by the expression 'sending in your checks'; in other words, claiming your baggage and—finishing your journey." In the main, however, he interpreted the dialect with considerable accuracy and ingenuity, and always with a zestful appreciation of its colorful origins.

The trail of the early English editions of Bret Harte is ramified and often obscure. It need not be explored in elaborate detail here, but one generalization regarding it is worth a

word of amplification. Harte's wide popularity abroad was due (apart from the intrinsic merit of his work) to its availability in cheap editions, and the cheap editions were themselves made possible by the rise of the railway library.

The present-day highly perfected system of periodical distribution, operated wherever civilization reaches, is merely an elaboration of a plan first put into execution by W. H. Smith long before the railroad itself came into being. Smith cut the time on the delivery of London newspapers to the Midlands and the North in half—from forty-eight to twenty-four hours—by dispatching relays of print-laden horses in the wake of the lumbering coaches. With the coming of the railway Smith saw, and apparently was alone in seeing, the enormous possibilities provided by this suddenly created reading public. Before any profit could be turned it was necessary to evolve and to erect the vast, complex, and costly machinery of distribution—machinery which, if it did not function throughout England, was not functioning at all. By the year of Smith's death, 1855, the innovation had already become an institution.

But it was well within the limits of likelihood that the British railway traveler, once hardened to the thrill of looking out of the window, once inured to the habit of reading as he rode, might soon tire of the involvements of home and foreign politics and be fair game for what a later psychology would tag the "literature of escape." George Routledge thought so. He had initiated his bookselling career with a little shop in the Strand, specializing in the old and the unsalable. It occurred to him that the market in remainders could be wholesomely stimulated by the simple device of spreading it beyond the borders of the metropolis, and with this inspiration the railway library was born. It flourished so exceedingly, according to Henry Curwen's *History of Booksellers*, that the house was soon able to offer Bulwer-Lytton twenty thousand pounds for the privilege of issuing low-priced reprints of his novels for ten years.

The units that composed the railway library had to be either popular or capable of being made to look popular, or both;

and as they had to sell at a low figure (usually a shilling), they must be manufactured at a lower. As a result, they were not pretentious examples of bookmaking, although as attention attracters they have seldom been surpassed. Issued in wrappers or paper-covered boards, they could reproduce any design and combination of hues which publisher and printer might unite in wanting, and thus fulfill the desired function of catching the passing eye. Unfortunately neither Messrs. Smith nor Messrs. Routledge took the slightest thought for the twentieth-century book collector, and he who would achieve a set of the railway library in first edition might better abandon the chase in favor of a search for an inscribed quarto *Hamlet*. But it is such circumstances that make book collecting as exciting a pursuit as poker (which, like book collecting, is "a sort of Brag").

The complexities injected into the business by the railway libraries may well have deterred any intending Harte bibliographer. The late Charles Meeker Kozlay of Brooklyn formed a remarkable Harte collection, which was sold at auction in New York in 1926, and the Kozlay catalogue is itself a more detailed and comprehensive bibliography than is available for the work of many authors. The collection, including items which were crowded over into a supplementary catalogue, embraced not quite five hundred units. Many of them, of course, were duplicates, but even with these discounted the total remains prodigious. To Bret Harte that day was indeed to be counted lost which did not produce its line.

Uncle Remus

WHEN YOUNG EDWARD DAVIS fell in an obscure action against the Yankees, a schoolfellow of his down in central Georgia who kept an elaborate notebook—a schoolfellow of just too tender years to be in the war himself—set down a brief obituary that opened with this pardonably partisan comment: “The Angels of heaven have recorded another deed of murder committed by the minions of Abe Lincoln.” A quarter-century later, when the schoolfellow had become one of the great storytellers of his generation, in response to a request for the names of “my favorite heroes in real life” he gave his vote for Lincoln, Stonewall Jackson, and Father Damien. They, like Edward Davis, had died in line of duty.

There was at least one other composition among the miscellaneous scribblings in the notebook which accented the vague enemy in the White House. It was intended for humor, but it was not particularly funny unless the reader was prepared to grow uproarious over an allusion to the size of Mr. Lincoln’s feet. Persons much older have said things much sillier, particularly in time of war. (What, by the way, ever became of the movement to try the Kaiser?) The momentous aspect of this particular contribution to the notebook was the fact that it was written in dialect—the dialect of the Georgia cracker—and was, so far as is known (to his daughter-biographer, at any rate), Joel Chandler Harris’s first essay in that field.

At the time of his frequent recourse to the notebook Joel Harris was learning to be a printer on the plantation of Joseph Addison Turner, nine miles from Joel’s birthplace at Eatonton. Turner was proprietor of the *Countryman*, a weekly newspaper

conducted somewhat on the classical pattern inferrible from its owner's name. Not least important among the associations which Joel formed on the Turner plantation was his friendship with Uncle George Terrell, before whose fire in the slave quarters Joel and his employer's children used to listen to tales of an animal world that had been passed from lip to ear by generations of a folk that had never heard of Aesop.

Sherman swept through Georgia from Atlanta to the sea, and the *Countryman* was an early post-bellum casualty. Young Harris went to the composing room of the Macon *Telegraph*, but an opportunity soon came to serve as secretary to the editor of the *Crescent Monthly* of New Orleans. His stay in that distressful city was brief; among his supreme recollections of it was "a ten minutes' talk with Mr. Hearn," two years his junior. He returned to Georgia and was drafted by an old neighbor, James P. Harrison, to edit the *Monroe Advertiser* of Forsyth. It is worth noting that the editor's duties included setting all the type, pulling the press, keeping the books, sweeping the floor, and wrapping the papers for mailing. Despite the multiplicity of his duties the editor, as editor, found time to become a celebrity of more than local renown. His fame as a paragrapher soon spread throughout Georgia, and Georgia (as New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians, and Illinoisans are perpetually surprised to learn) is the largest State east of the Mississippi.

Toward the end of 1870 Harris accepted an offer to join the staff of the Savannah *Morning News* at the incredible salary of forty dollars a week. This honorarium made it possible for him to become a boarder at the Florida House, where he met, among other occupants, Captain and Mrs. Pierre La Rose, of Quebec, and, more important still, their daughter Esther, who in 1873 became Mrs. Joel Chandler Harris. When the yellow-fever epidemic broke out in Atlanta three years later, the family had increased from two to four and it was the presence of the little newcomers that impelled Harris to resign from the *News* and join the staff of the Atlanta *Constitution*, with which newspaper he remained associated until 1900.

Not long after Harris joined the *Constitution* staff the paper passed into the hands of Evan P. Howell, whose family still controls its destinies. About the same time Sam W. Small, the *Constitution's* closest approximation to a latter-day colyumist, severed his connection with the paper. Small had established a Negro character, Uncle Si, who seems to have won a measure of popularity, for on Small's withdrawal Howell asked Harris to carry on the series. The plan did not appeal especially to Harris, who had too much of the creative spirit to wish slavishly to appropriate another man's ideas. He was willing to compromise, however, by providing a substitute of his own. And thus Uncle Remus was born. "He was not an invention of my own," Harris explained later, "but a human syndicate, I might say, of three or four old darkies I had known." The name itself probably went back to Forsyth days, for Forsyth had a town gardener who was called Uncle Remus.

§2. There is a remote possibility that Uncle Remus would have flourished and died within the columns of the *Constitution* if Jefferson Davis, late president of the Confederate States of America, had not signed a contract with the Appletons to write a book on *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*. The contract had been entered into in 1875; the work was to be delivered within two years, but 1879 came to a close and the manuscript had not been placed in the Appletons' hands. Accordingly, J. C. Derby, as the Appletons' representative, went to visit Davis at the latter's home, Beauvoir, on the Gulf shore of Mississippi. Davis had turned his documents over to a third party who was to prepare the manuscript for publication, and the third party had done nothing about it. Matters were quickly adjusted, and the book appeared in 1881.

On his way back from Beauvoir, in February, 1880, Derby stopped in at Atlanta and visited Harris, with whom he had already been in correspondence, and arrangements were completed for the publication of *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings: The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation*. The task of illustrating it was assigned to Frederick S. Church and James H.

Moser, and an inspection of the first edition makes clear the division of labor between the two. Moser illustrated those portions of the book which required the use of the human face or figure, and Church had charge of the animal drawings—the illustrations, that is, for the Uncle Remus stories proper. Thus most of the burden fell to Church. The frontispiece and the title-page vignette, the head of a chuckling Uncle Remus, were Moser's. Neither illustrator did a particularly effective job; *Uncle Remus*, indeed, was not definitively illustrated until 1895, when A. B. Frost set his incomparable pen to the task.

Church's problem, given a modicum of skill in the delineation of animals, was relatively simple, with one confusing exception. What was he to do with "Miss Meadows en de gals"? "Perhaps they mean just *Nature*," he wrote Harris, "in which case I should depict them as pretty girls in simple costumes, making a charming contrast to the ludicrous positions of the animals." Harris approved the idea wholeheartedly, admitting, however, that he had not the slightest idea how the Meadowses were really supposed to look, for "my relations toward the sketches you are illustrating are those of a compiler merely." He was always at pains to make his position toward the Uncle Remus stories clear—he was not their author, he insisted, but merely their transcriber.

There is another aspect of the Uncle Remus stories that must continually be borne in mind—an aspect which Harris saw as soon as they began to appear in the *Constitution*. They are universally regarded as funny, which is reasonable, because in the main they are funny, and it was certainly the humor in them that had made them appeal so strongly to the 'prentice printer listening to old George Terrell back on the Turner plantation. But Harris's main concern in setting them down was to preserve the remnants of a folklore which he was sufficiently farseeing to know would one day perish from the earth unless someone who understood the racial psychology and social philosophy behind it acted as amanuensis to its surviving narrators. And while the book itself is designated on the shelfback

only *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*, and while the supplementary description on the title-page, *The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation*, gives that division of the book an apparent subordination, still it is this folklore which is the stuff of the Uncle Remus stories. The stories, however, were placed first in the book, the "Legends of the Old Plantation" section extending from page 19 to page 148, and the other two sections, including four pages of "Plantation Proverbs," to page 231, so that the stories comprise more than half of the book.

The serious purpose of the collection was made plain in a ten-page introduction which began: "I am advised by my publishers that this book is to be included in their catalogue of humorous publications, and their friendly warning gives me an opportunity to say that however humorous it may be in effect, its intention is perfectly serious; and, even if it were otherwise, it seems to me that a volume written wholly in dialect must have its solemn, not to say melancholy, features."

As to the dialect itself, though "different . . . from the intolerable misrepresentations of the minstrel stage," he could assert that "it is at least phonetically genuine." The introduction gave ample evidence, also, of the painstaking study of folklore which had preceded and accompanied the compiling of the stories. In a letter written three years later to G. Laurence Gomme, editor of the *Folk-Lore Journal* of London—*Uncle Remus* had been issued in London in 1881 with the imprint of David Bogue, who published Oscar Wilde's *Poems* the same year—appeared this illuminating paragraph:

"It is a misfortune, perhaps, from an English point of view, that the stories in that volume are rendered in the American Negro dialect, but it was my desire to preserve the stories as far as I might be able in the form in which I heard them, and to preserve also if possible the quaint humor of the Negro. It is his humor that gives the collection its popularity in the United States, but I think you will find the stories more important than humorous should you take the trouble to examine them. Not one of them is cooked, and not one nor any part of one is

an invention of mine. They are all genuine folk-lore tales." It is significant to recall that the original title projected for the book seems to have been "Uncle Remus's Folk-Lore."

It is interesting to note that the shelfback of the book was adorned with a representation of a banjo, certainly to Harris's dismay, for this was an instrument regarding the use of which among plantation Negroes Harris had a mind of his own. "I have never seen a plantation Negro play it," he wrote a few years after the appearance of *Uncle Remus*. "I have heard them make sweet music with the quills—Pan's pipes; I have heard them play passingly well on the fiddle, the fife and the flute; and I have heard them blow a tin trumpet with surprising skill; but I have never seen a banjo, or a tambourine or a pair of bones, in the hands of a plantation Negro." The bones alluded to were not, of course, those to whose accompaniment the Negro has long been wont to chant the desired advent of Little Joe or of Ater from Decatur.

§3. *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings* was issued in November, 1880, though the title-page is dated 1881. In fact, no fewer than four editions had appeared by December 8, 1880. The collector is assisted by the fact that in the first edition the advertisements at the back do not quote reviews of the book. Charles A. Dana of the *New York Sun* told Derby that the book would "not only have a large sale, but an enduring sale," and John Bigelow told him: "It will live as long as Aesop's fables." *Uncle Remus* received widespread and favorable notice in print, and, to its author's gratification, was by no means ignored by those scientific and professional periodicals whose editors could best comprehend the serious underlying significance of the author's effort.

Meanwhile more stories were appearing in the *Atlanta Constitution*, and a few in magazines, for the mine of material was well-nigh inexhaustible. Harris, of course, no longer enjoyed the contacts that had given him the great original bulk of the stories. The war had changed the face of the South; Harris had become a city dweller; worst of all, he had grown up, and an-

cient (and not so ancient) Negro chroniclers who would unburden themselves to a child became confused, self-conscious, and silent when an adult tried to wheedle stories out of them.

But his knowledge of the race stood Harris in good stead. In the introduction to the second Uncle Remus volume, *Nights with Uncle Remus*, published by Osgood of Boston in 1883 (which house, the following year, would issue *Mingo and Other Sketches in Black and White*, Harris's first and probably best collection of original short stories of Georgia life), he describes how he prevailed on the members of a group of colored laborers waiting for a train at a small Georgia station to tell him stories. Hearing an allusion to Ol' Molly Har', the wife of Brer Rabbit, he drew near the group and quietly made himself a member of it. He was soon able to make an opportunity to tell a story himself—the story of the Tar-Baby, easily the most famous of all the narratives associated with the name of Uncle Remus, and the second story in the original collection. He followed this with another; then it was their turn, and “for almost two hours, a crowd of thirty or more vied with each other to see which could tell the most and best tales.” Presumably the train did not wait.

The Uncle Remus series did not end until 1918, ten years after Harris's death, with the assembling of the stories that make up *Uncle Remus Returns*. Some day, if so many omnibus books have not been published in the interval that the hand has become wearied of holding them, an Uncle Remus Omnibus should be compiled for the benefit of those who must ever be aware of a hideous vacuity in any bookshelf whereon the gleeman of the old plantation is not represented.

Treasure Island

THE ASSOCIATION of a book and a fire dates doubtless from the beginning of printing. It is an association that has its less pleasing connotations—witness that most excruciating of bibliographies, James Anson Fenner's *Books Condemned to Be Burnt*, or the distressing first chapter of Blades's *The Enemies of Books* and the appalling frontispiece: "Servant using a Caxton to light the fire." It were best to draw the curtain over these painful phenomena, and to consider in their stead such agreeable titles as *Fireside Travels*, *Back-Log Studies*, and *The Cricket on [or The Cloister and] the Hearth*. Sir Philip Sidney's supreme test of reader interest, be it remembered, was that a tale must be able to hold "children from play, and old men from the chimney corner," the superbly appropriate quotation which introduces every volume of fiction in Everyman's Library—almost any book should be able to draw one into a chimney corner, and many might put him to sleep there.

A story, then, whose composition was begun "on a chill September morning, by the cheek of a brisk fire," with "the rain drumming on the window," was clearly off to an auspicious start. The place was "a house lugubriously known as the Late Miss McGregor's Cottage" in the Highland village of Braemar, no great distance from Aberdeen, where today thrifty Scotsmen dispense to less thrifty tourists overpriced manuals of "Scotch jokes." The writer was Robert Louis Stevenson, christened somewhat otherwise not quite thirty-one years before in his birth city of Edinburgh, which is nearer to Braemar than Aberdeen was or is. The sojourn at Braemar was somewhat in the nature of a second honeymoon; Stevenson had married Fanny

Van de Grift Osbourne in San Francisco some sixteen months earlier, thereby becoming twice over a stepfather.

One of the stepchildren was a girl and the other was a boy, and both loom reasonably large in the Stevenson story. In the present narrative, however, the brunt of the looming must be borne by the boy. He was Lloyd Osbourne, age twelve.

There should have been, may have been, an abundance of things to read in the Late Miss McGregor's Cottage. If Stevenson had carried thither a complete set of his own published writings up to that time they would have required more shelf-room than Miss McGregor, departing, had perhaps left behind her to be filled. Several of these productions, to be sure, were not of impressive physical dimensions, but two or three were full-size cloth-bound books—sturdy enough to have outlasted most of their frailer brethren, which latter have mostly become pearls of exceeding great price.

§2. More than sixty years before the momentous Braemar sojourn, Walter Scott (not quite yet Sir Walter) had gone a voyage along the coast of Scotland in order to acquire salty color for *The Pirate*. The "official chief of the expedition," he recorded, "is Mr. Stevenson, the surveyor . . . a most gentleman-like and modest man, and well known by his scientific skill." Robert Stevenson's bust stands today in the Bell Rock Lighthouse, which he constructed, and as the Bell Rock Lighthouse rises some ten miles off the coast at Arbroath (and Arbroath is some seventy-five miles from Edinburgh), and the marble effigy is therefore reasonably inaccessible to the comfort-loving pilgrim, a copy of it has been placed in the Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh. The Bell Rock Lighthouse, itself a more redoubtable and significant monument to the genius of its builder than any quantity of formal statuary, is also known to history and navigation as the Inchcape Lighthouse—a name that immediately recalls Southey's moral ballad of the good Abbot of Aberbrothok and the practical joke of Sir Ralph the Rover, who, while never probably hoist with his own petar, was definitively sunk by his own warped sense of humor.

Robert Stevenson's youngest son, Thomas, served as apprentice in his father's office, and at twenty-eight became a partner. Two years later he married Margaret Isabella Balfour, daughter of a minister at Colinton, at the edge of the Pentland Hills, not four miles out of Edinburgh. Two years later again was born to them their only child, Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson. His early career was chequered by recurrent illnesses which exacted a toll in physical stamina that Nature was never to repay him. His whole brief life was a desperate, gay quest for health. England, Germany, Italy, France—he had visited them all before he was fourteen, learning thereby much that the orthodox schooling which was perforce denied him could not have imparted. Back in Edinburgh, he wrote in his sixteenth year, and his father put into type, a brief account of *The Pentland Rising: A Page of History*—history then just two hundred years old.

A year later young Stevenson entered Edinburgh University. After a bit of idle toying with the classics he gave some evidence of a voluntary acceptance of the family craft, engineering. This seeming determination crystallized, in his twenty-first year, in the composition of an essay that must have gladdened Thomas Stevenson's heart. On March 27, 1871, his son read a paper, *Notice of a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses*, before the Royal Scottish Society of Arts, and won the award of the Society's silver medal.

Exactly twelve days after this achievement—what an inwardly stressful interval it must have been!—Stevenson, on a fateful walk with his father, made the momentous announcement that he wished to abandon engineering for literature. His equity in the vocation of his choice was physically of the slenderest. His *opera omnia* included two pamphlets which were hardly yet of epochal dimensions and a mass of scribblings such as has marked the path of many a youngster who has never climbed above the timber line of proficiency in English composition. One item in this clutter, the earliest of them all, would one day see print—*The History of Moses*, dictated to his mother when the author was six years old as his entry in a competition

conducted by his uncle David Stevenson (who, like his brother Thomas, was an engineer to the Board of Northern Light-houses). The guerdon was a Bible picture book, and the contest was open to the donor's children and to his nieces and nephews. Thomas's boy won the prize, and thereupon declared, according to his mother, that "it was the desire of his heart to be an author." The original manuscript, in Mrs. Stevenson's hand, and the Bible picture book became part of the collection of A. Edward Newton, who issued the narrative, an authentic Stevenson first edition, as a privately printed Christmas pamphlet in 1919. Sir Edmund Gosse, describing the booklet in the *London Times*, noted that "the inspired infant appears to have mastered the pencil, though not the pen, for there is a very beautiful coloured frontispiece of the Israelites going out of Egypt; they are all wearing top-hats, and several of them are smoking pipes."

His son's decision was something of a blow to Thomas Stevenson. He offered a compromise—neither engineering nor literature, but the law. So Stevenson began to study law, that confusing Scots law which admits verdicts of "not proven," calls a defendant a pannel, and adheres to sundry other oddities of juridical practice and nomenclature with which every reader of the enthralling criminal narratives of William Roughead is familiar. He studied it with sufficient application to pass his final examination for the bar in July, 1875. And despite this application, despite sundry interruptions and excursions made necessary by his health, he found time to make his bow as a professional writer in various substantial British periodicals—the *Portfolio*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, the *Fortnightly*, the *Cornhill*, the *Academy*. A year later, with a friend, he traveled by canoe from Antwerp across the Flemish plain, and in 1878 appeared his record of the jaunt, *An Inland Voyage*, his first book-size book. In the summer of the latter year he made another famous journey, this time aboard a more cumbersome craft, and in 1879 was issued *Travels With a Donkey in the Cevennes*.

The Flemish tour of '78 had ended at Grez, whose artist

community, declares Rosaline Masson in her compact study of Stevenson, was "somewhat diffidently and curiously awaiting the arrival in their midst of a woman artist seeking country quarters after study in Paris." She was Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, a native of Indianapolis, and her son and daughter were with her. There was a Mr. Osbourne, but he was already on his way out of the family chronicle. And for Stevenson Grez became twice over the end of a journey. His devotion to Mrs. Osbourne gained fervor with her return to America, particularly when he had the news that she was ill. In August, 1879, he crossed the Atlantic in an immigrant ship and continued to the Pacific Coast by immigrant train. Twenty-three such days would have wrecked a sturdier constitution than Stevenson's; it was the end of the year before he was once more restored to a semblance of well-being.

But he was busy writing—had been busy, when health permitted (and even when it did not), since the *Devonian* had passed out of the Thames estuary. Stevenson will always remain an illustrious exemplar not alone of the profession but also of the sheer drudgery of letters. He wrote to eat, which, if gossip be fact, was rather better than Homer's self was able to do. During his brief halt in New York Stevenson made tentative efforts to dispose of his wares. William W. Ellsworth of the Century Company records that a clerk "was behind the counter one day when a stranger called and asked if any stories were wanted. He was a rough-looking stranger, who, it seems, had just come off an emigrant ship. Anything he cared to leave would be handed to the editors, the boy told him. The stranger turned and went out; The Century had lost Robert Louis Stevenson!" But there was a happy ending—a little more than four years later the *Century* began to serialize *The Silverado Squatters, Sketches from a California Mountain*.

Exactly a year after his departure from London, Stevenson, with his bride and stepson, sailed from New York for the homeland. But the gallant excursion into the West had set the indelible print of disease upon him, and on his rearrival overseas he

was ordered to Davos, Switzerland, where he and Mrs. Stevenson remained until the succeeding spring, when he returned to Edinburgh. And so to Braemar.

§3. Regardless of how much or how little there may have been to read in the Braemar cottage, Master Osbourne at the moment was concerned with art. He had with him, his stepfather subsequently testified, "a shilling box of water colours"—and considering the quantity of water colors available today for the maximum price in any five and ten cent store, what a tremendous amount of the stuff must have been dispensed in the United Kingdom fifty years ago for a shilling! There was enough of it, at any rate, to produce an impressive total of sketches, and these were duly hung and submitted to the inspection of Mr. Stevenson. It is the custom of fathers, and doubtless of stepfathers, to conduct lengthy tests of their youngsters' toys to see if they operate properly, even if the toys break down in the attempt, and, actuated possibly by the same psychology, Mr. Stevenson before long was painting pictures on his own account.

What ultimately became of the products of the two supreme exponents of the Braemar School no history of nineteenth-century art has ever disclosed. Only a single opus proved of surpassing importance—which, after all, is a far higher percentage than a good many art exhibitions can show. It is regrettable that this uniquely important masterpiece contrived to become lost within a few months of its completion—no matter; it had done its work, and a substitute was quickly produced.

Mr. Stevenson has left the impression that his toying with Lloyd's water colors was merely an act of Samaritanship. He would, he says, "sometimes unbend a little" and "pass the afternoon with him in a generous emulation," which is precisely the attitude assumed by every father in tinkering with every Lloyd's water colors or steam engine or horseshoe set. "On one of these occasions," he continues, "I made the map of an island; it was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained har-

hours that pleased me like sonnets; and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance 'Treasure Island'."

To study the elaborately colored map until it became a vivid reality to the inward eye was no arduous task to a Stevenson; with the abandonment of brush for pen young Lloyd doubtless sighed his relief at the retreat of the grown-up to a grown-up's duties. And on the chill September morning that has already been noted (which happened not to be in September) his elder began the composition of the story that owed its conception to the map—a story that was headed, on the first page of the manuscript, not "Treasure Island," but "The Sea Cook."

Sometime in September (actually, this time, in September) there was a visitor at the Late Miss McGregor's Cottage—Dr. Alexander Hay Japp. Stevenson, a little more than a year before, had had a paper on Thoreau in the *Cornhill*; Dr. Japp, under the anagram of H. A. Page, was the author of a study of Thoreau which had appeared in book form two years earlier than the appearance of the *Cornhill* article. Dr. Japp did not wholly agree with certain of Stevenson's statements; "had either of us," wrote Stevenson later, "been men . . . of less temper and justice, the difference might have made us enemies instead of making us friends." The affair, presumably, was threshed out at this Braemar conference, amicably, intelligently, and conclusively. At any rate, time sufficed at the end for Stevenson to read the early chapters of "The Sea Cook."

Dr. Japp liked the story. He gave practical proof of the fact by recommending it to James Henderson, editor of *Young Folks*, who accepted it (sight unseen, save for the early chapters) for serial publication. Edmund Gosse, another Braemar visitor, now assumed good-natured supervision of the story if not of the writer, and thanks to his ability to be heard when the hearing could help, and to be out of sight when the seeing would prove a distraction, nineteen chapters were soon ready. Toward the end of September Stevenson bore them with him to London and James Henderson.

Autumn can be a stern season in the Highlands—even the summer of 1881 had proved severe—and Stevenson, whose health had long been fragile, repaired to Davos again for the winter. Lloyd by this time appears to have abandoned his shilling box of water colors. Instead, he had a printing press, which press became one of the most famous and authentic “private presses” in history. The story of its products, in all the impressive panoply of bibliographical minutiae, is available to us in Prideaux-Livingston. Weight for weight, probably no series of publications is quite so valuable in the bookseller’s and the collector’s eye.

Meanwhile, in its issue of October 1, 1881, *Young Folks* had begun publication of *Treasure Island*. Not, be it noted, “The Sea Cook.” The altered title was Mr. Henderson’s doing. What, one wonders, would have been the fate of the story had it retained the author’s own title? Let not “The Sea Cook” be condemned as the poorer choice merely because it did not happen to endure beyond the manuscript. There is much to be said for it—but of what avail the saying? Speculation is idle, and it must have seemed particularly idle to Stevenson at Davos (assuming he speculated about it at all), since the title was now water over the dam, and the story itself emphatically was not. The story, indeed, was rapidly catching up on him, and nothing, say those who have been in the same predicament, moves with quite the speed of an uncompleted serial which has already begun its appearance in type in pursuit of its author.

Stevenson worked grandly under pressure. He wrote the last fourteen chapters at the rate of one a day, and Mr. Henderson was spared the embarrassment that might have been his had his new author, for whatever reason, failed in his commitment. Stevenson himself would hardly have shared any embarrassment there might have been to share, for the story appeared as the work of “Captain George North.”

Oddly, considering its subsequent fame, *Treasure Island* was not a great success as a serial. The Prideaux-Livingston bibliography, in fact, declares that it was “a comparative failure,”

and adds that "'The Black Arrow,' which was the next work of Stevenson's to be published in *Young Folks*, was far more popular.' Estimate the proportion of readers of *Treasure Island* to-day to the proportion of readers of *The Black Arrow*!

Treasure Island did not appear in book form until November, 1883—almost two years after the conclusion of its serialization. The house of Cassell made an offer for it, the amount of which is duly recorded in a famous Stevenson letter to his father and mother: "How much do you suppose? I believe it would be an excellent jest to keep the answer till my next letter. For two cents I would do so. Shall I? Anyway I'll turn the page first. No—well, a hundred pounds, all alive, O! A hundred jingling, tingling, golden, minted quid. Is not this wonderful?" Wonderful indeed as a speculative advance payment, for the story was no tremendous success on its first book appearance; according to Graham Balfour's life of Stevenson, "During the first year no more than five thousand six hundred copies were sold in Great Britain"—a fact that did not deter practitioners of another form of piracy than that described in the book, for it early appeared as a serial "even in Greek and Spanish papers."

Sundry bibliographers have declared that there are two groups of apparent authorities who are in reality the least dependable of persons to consult about books. One group comprises publishers, the other authors. It was Stevenson himself who, twelve years and more after the event, said that it was "on a chill September morning" that he "began 'The Sea Cook.'" But writing to William Ernest Henley on August 25, 1881, he had said: "I am now on another lay for the moment, purely owing to Lloyd, this one . . . 'The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island: A Story for Boys' . . . Two chapters are written, and have been tried on Lloyd with great success."

When one begins to quote the letters one inevitably continues, particularly as they contain an unusually complete record of the growth of a book. In September, day of month not specified, he wrote Henley again after the significant visit of Dr. Japp and the latter's good work in London: "The terms

are £2 10s. a page of 4500 words; that's not noble, is it? But I have my copyright safe. I don't get illustrated—a blessing; that's the price I have to pay for my copyright." And he added: "I'll make this boys' book business pay; but I have to make a beginning. When I'm done with *Young Folks*, I'll try Routledge or some one. I feel pretty sure 'The Sea Cook' will do to reprint, and bring something decent at that."

According to Mr. Balfour, "only a few paragraphs" of the serial version, "chiefly in the sixteenth and two following chapters," were altered in the book publication.

Treasure Island always occupied a warm spot in Stevenson's heart. When the *Idler* printed the famous series of papers that appeared (1894) as *My First Book*, Stevenson chose *Treasure Island* for his text, though it was far from being his first book, by several titles and by several years. He says as much himself in his opening sentence, adding: "But I am well aware that my paymaster, the Great Public, regards what else I have written with indifference, if not aversion; if it call upon me at all, it calls on me in the familiar and indelible character; and when I am asked to talk of my first book, no question in the world but what is meant is my first novel." These, at all events, had certainly been the sentiments, twelve years earlier, of "S.L.O., an American gentleman," to whom *Treasure Island* had been dedicated. Only those who knew Lloyd Osbourne well enough to be aware that his first name was Samuel, perhaps, were able at the time to detect him beneath the semianonymity of the initials. He deserved the dedication. But for his box of shilling water colors, *Treasure Island* might never have been written.

§1. So far as anyone has been able to determine, every copy of the first edition of *Treasure Island* is like every other, except that some copies were bound in green cloth, others in gray, others in red, and still others in brown, and that some have four pages of advertisements bound in at the back and others eight pages. These divergences, properly enough, have failed to quicken the pulses of bibliographer, bookseller, or collector, all of whom are in general highly excitable.

Much, however, has been made of the fact that the first line of Captain Billy Bones's song, "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest," originally appeared as here given, with a confusing absence of capital letters, so that young Jim Hawkins (who only heard the song, of course, but would have been as sadly puzzled if he had seen it in print) thought it had to do "with that identical big box of his upstairs in the front room," whereas young American readers (who would recognize trunk or box, but are more likely to interpret a chest as a thing to catch colds in) have often conjured up far more shudderful pictures of a company of castaways taking up squatter's rights on the quarterdeck of a briny and alcoholic corpse. The shortage of capitals, however, persists throughout the edition, and has since characterized scores of reprints—it has been noted, indeed, in an edition published by a thoroughly reputable New York publisher which bears on the title-page the not particularly Paleozoic date of 1926. It emphatically does not divide the first edition into distinct issues, and the authoritative Stevenson bibliography does not even intimate that it does. But ever and anon an enthusiastic cataloguer hails the "deficiency of capitals" as a mark of first issue, and less enthusiastic but too readily convinced cataloguers follow after, and the news that is no news gets to be proclaimed throughout bookdom.

If there actually were an authentic point to divide the first edition of *Treasure Island* into two issues, it would be pleasant if it involved Captain Billy's celebrated quatrain, for the lines are perhaps the most familiar interpolated stanza in all English prose. Stevenson told Colvin that he took the name of the island from Charles Kingsley's *At Last* (1871), a narrative of a voyage which Kingsley made to the West Indies toward the end of his life in which he described the regions which had been part of the locale of the novel with less conviction and vividness, even with less accuracy, than he had done in *Westward Ho!* There is only a single allusion to The Dead Man's Chest in *At Last*, according to Burton E. Stevenson: "We were crawling slowly along looking out for Virgin Garda: the first of those number-

less isles which Columbus, so goes the tale, discovered on St. Ursula's day, and named them after the saint and her eleven thousand mythical virgins. Unfortunately, English buccaneers have since given to them less poetic names. The Dutchman's Cap, Broken Jerusalem, The Dead Man's Chest, Rum Island, and so forth, mark a time and race more prosaic." The present generation will undoubtedly agree with Mr. Stevenson that the secular names are "much more picturesque than the colorless virgins."

Mr. Stevenson carries his researches further, even to doubting whether the spot "ever was really called 'Dead Man's Chest.' Present day maps give its name as 'Dead Chest Island,' and that is the name it has been known by, on the maps at least, for a century and a half." Either "Dead Man's Chest" or "Dead Chest," particularly the latter, could well be an instance of popular etymology, which has given the world such cartographic oddities as Picket Wire for Purgatoire in old maps of the Mississippi Valley, or the more durable Rotten Row for Route des Rois. Mr. Stevenson's discussion of the problem is found in his account of Young E. Allison's "Derelict" in *Famous Single Poems* (1923), a fascinating series of exercises in detecto-bibliography. Just as Robert Louis Stevenson took a place name and fashioned a refrain around it, so Young E. Allison took the refrain and built it into a vivid, gory piece of impressionism that has become a classic:

Fifteen men of 'em stiff and stark—
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
 Ten of the crew had the Murder mark—
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
 'Twas a cutlass swipe, or an ounce of lead,
 Or a yawing hole in a battered head—
 And the scuppers glut with a totting red.
 And there they lay—
 Ave, damn my eyes!—
 All lookouts clapped
 On paradise—
 All souls bound just contrariwise—
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

§5. The first American edition of *Treasure Island*, published at Boston by Roberts Brothers in 1884, possesses also the distinction of being the first illustrated edition—the first illustrated English edition was not issued until near the close of 1885. The Boston edition of 1884, thus, is a collector's item in its own right, and a somewhat elusive one. There were at least two issues of that date; the earlier is identifiable from the fact that the advertisements following the text do not quote reviews of the book—an exemplification of a somewhat elementary principle of bibliographical research which finds a more notable parallel in Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus*.

Stevenson had been introduced to America five years earlier with the publication, also at Boston, of *Travels With a Donkey in the Cevennes*. This edition is not common, nor is it, when obtainable, vastly expensive. This pleasant and somewhat unusual combination of circumstances suggests two interesting fields to the collector. At no great outlay of cash, and with sufficient difficulty to remove the effort from that pernicious group of activities which are not worth the doing because the doing imposes no slightest burden on one's intelligence or patience, he can assemble a worthy collection of first American editions of Stevenson (or, for that matter, of Kipling, Meredith, Hardy, Galsworthy, Conrad, always excepting a few titles) that even the most amply funded of his competitors will have as much trouble in the garnering as himself. Or, if his tastes are too catholic to permit him to hitch his wagon to a single star, he can attempt to assemble (with less hope of success, which makes the enterprise more attractive) the first appearance above an American imprint of each of a whole group of English authors of his choice. Scorn not the first American edition—the English author does not, or the second, or the two hundred and second.

The Red Badge of Courage

ONE MORNING when the nineteenth century was in its dotage, and Park Row really was Newspaper Row, and the Lexow Committee was listening to the amazing recital of New York's depravities, and the bicycle was coming into its own, and the Princess Liliuokalani had renounced the throne of Hawaii for herself and her heirs forever, and James J. Corbett was champion of the world, and the Federal income tax was a-stillborn, and people were reciting a double couplet about Lizzie Borden and wondering whether Dr. Robert W. Buchanan would escape the electric chair (he did not), and Cuba was heading toward revolution and independence, and the name of Coxey inspired ridicule or pity or terror, and *Trilby* was running in *Harper's*, and "You're not the only pebble on the beach" was the *dernier cri* in Americanisms, and the whole nation was humming "After the Ball" and laughing at the Yellow Kid, and Herbert Hoover was a student at Leland Stanford Junior University, and Woodrow Wilson was a professor at Princeton, and Grover Cleveland was back in the White House, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a schoolboy of thirteen, and a dollar and a half would buy a good pair of shoes—one morning in this pleasant and momentous epoch a young man entered the offices of Bacheller, Johnson and Bacheller in the old Tribune Building at 154 Nassau Street, and asked for Mr. Irving Bacheller.

Bacheller, Johnson and Bacheller conducted a newspaper syndicate. Even in that era of intense sophistication, probably nine out of ten persons who heard the term "newspaper syndicate" would have countered with "What's that?" This was

pardonable, because Bacheller, Johnson and Bacheller were pioneers in their field, and were still very nearly alone in it.

Mr. Bacheller identified himself to the young man, whom he recalls as slight of figure, modest and pleasant in manner, and with the look of a subject who had stepped out of a mellow old painting. This air of antiquity was neither artificial nor tangible, but its presence was unmistakable. Nor did it prevent the young man's being, in externals, an authentic product of his time and place.

The young man told Mr. Bacheller that his name was Stephen Crane. He had called to leave with Mr. Bacheller a manuscript which he had shown to Mr. William Dean Howells and to Mr. Hamlin Garland, and both had liked it. This was no mean recommendation for a manuscript, yet the enthusiasm had not been shared by two or three editors of magazines that counted.

It is not likely that the edict "No more war stuff!" had gone out from their sancta, for this was the America of 1894, not of 1924. No epoch in American history has ever produced quite so much magazine copy as the Civil War. The deluge began in 1861, and it would continue until well after 1894—certainly until 1898, when the cry of "Remember the Maine!" would give rise in more ways than one to a proportionate willingness to forget Appomattox. But for whatever reason, these same bellicose editors had been cool toward Mr. Crane's manuscript, though it was quite definitely a war story.

Mr. Crane was young, but he was already inured to the coolness of editors. "Of all human lots for a person of sensibility," he would write later of this period, "that of an obscure freelance in journalism is, I think, the most discouraging." He had been born some twenty-two years before in Newark, New Jersey, the fourteenth and last child of the Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane. The elder Crane had himself been the youngest of six children, so that those who aver that genius most frequently attains fruition in the last-born have a doubly effective argument in the instance of Stephen. The father had been a

writer before the son; he contributed to the *Methodist Quarterly Review* and the *Christian Advocate* and was the author of *The Right Way, or Practical Lectures on the Decalogue, Holiness the Birthright of All God's Children*, and a few other treatises of only slightly wider appeal. The *Dictionary of American Biography* says of him that "he leaves the impression of an unusually noble mind straitened by dogma and a narrow education." His calling and his age, perhaps, kept him from service in the Civil War—there was no tradition of arms in the immediate Crane family, at least during the war generation.

Jonathan Crane died at Port Jervis, New York, when Stephen was ten years old, and the family went to Asbury Park, New Jersey, adjoining Ocean Grove, which latter settlement had been established by the Methodist Church some ten years before. Thirteen years after the Cranes took up their residence at Asbury the earliest Baedeker for the United States would treat Ocean Grove as something of a social oddity: "This extraordinary settlement, possible only in America, in which many thousands of persons, young and old, voluntarily elect to spend their summer vacations under a religious autocracy, which is severe both in its positive and negative regulations, is curious enough to repay a short visit." Asbury, according to the same authority of the same date (1893), "is largely frequented by those who object to the religious management of Ocean Grove, but appreciate the 'no license' policy of its sister town." Here Stephen Crane served his novitiate to literature by helping a brother garner news for the folks at home and for the greater glory of Asbury. For two years he attended Claverack College and Hudson River Institute at Claverack, New York, across the Hudson from the Catskills; he was at Lafayette for a time; then entered Syracuse University with the class of '94.

Traces of his presence there (which lasted only a year, when his mother's death ended his hopes of further formal education) are to be found in the *Onondagan*, the Syracuse exemplar of the elaborate annual without which no institution of the higher learning can really lay claim to varsity stature. Fresh-

man Crane made Delta Upsilon, played some baseball, was captain of the fraternity cricket team, was a member of the Delta Upsilon Coasting Club and of the mysterious (to the non-Syracusan, at least) Tooth Pick Club, and served as secretary-treasurer of the Claverack College and Hudson River Institute Alumni Association's Syracuse representation of eight. He was, obviously, among the milder campus notables, as is further proved by the fact that the "Grinds" section of the *Onondagan* immortalized him by selection for comment, only thirty or so freshmen being accorded this distinction among two or three hundred of their classmates. The quotation which followed Crane's name was this:

Sweet drop of pure and pearly light,
In thee the rays of virtue shine,
More calmly clear, more mildly bright
Than any gem that gilds the mine.

From Syracuse Crane went to New York and lived for three years in Grub Street. He wrote a story called *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* which nobody wanted to publish, and so he borrowed money and published it himself. Ostensibly it was the work of "Johnston Smith," and it was supposed to sell for fifty cents a copy. This was high for a day when the newsstands were thick with novels in wrappers at twenty-five cents each—novels much longer than *Maggie*, and written by men and women much better known than Johnston Smith. On the copy which Crane gave his friend Lucius L. Button of Rochester he wrote:

"It is inevitable that you be greatly shocked by the book but continue, please, with all possible courage, to the end. For it tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls, notably an occasional street girl, who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people. It is probable that the reader of this small thing may consider the author to be a bad man; but obviously that is a matter of small consequence to 'The Author.'"

How many copies of *Maggie* were printed may never be known, largely because no Crane enthusiast has ever been able to identify the printer—the one person who would be likely to know the actual or approximate figures. It is known, however, that the books were distributed through the regulation channels whereby paper-bound novels went out to the reading multitudes, who proved to be not at all multitudinous when it came to buying *Maggies*. Here again definite figures are not available—one would particularly like to have the statistics covering copies returned. It seems certain, however, that none of the returns were again sent out, and this fact would doubtless prove significant if one knew precisely where the significance lay. It was a practice of the times to stack up copies of paper-bound returns and draw a paintbrush down one edge (generally the bottom, or least conspicuous, edge) so that the copies could not be rereturned by overcanny newsdealers and a second refund collected if the books went out at a lower price. (It appears that there were persons of that stripe in the early 'nineties.) For the returns might be trimmed by the news company, if they required trimming, and new wrappers affixed which bore a lower price mark. The price marks on paper-bound wares, by the way, were bona fide, and the "Price, 50 Cents" announcement on *Maggie's* yellow wrapper meant fifty cents—or, as the trade designated it, and as the paper-bound trade still designates a half-dollar book, a "four-shilling novel"—not the English shilling but its American namesake, a heritage from colonial days, worth different amounts in different States, but worth in colonial New York twelve and one-half cents.

Now it is certain that *Maggie*, once back in the news company's stockroom, never went out again at a reduced price; or, at any rate, no copy in any other wrappers than the original yellow has ever been seen by a Crane collector. Nor have any copies with a protective streak of paint ever come to light. *Maggie's* career as the work of "Johnston Smith" ended, all too clearly, with the first return of unsold copies from booksellers and news dealers.

§2. But William Dean Howells liked *Maggie*, and to him, logically and inevitably, Crane showed, when it was completed an indeterminate number of months later, the manuscript of *The Red Badge of Courage*. And it was this manuscript, its edges somewhat frayed, which Stephen Crane was now confiding to the mercies of Bacheller, Johnson and Bacheller.

Mr. Bacheller promised to read it. He took it with him that evening to his home far, far up in the West Eighties, and he and Mrs. Bacheller read it aloud to each other, turn and turn about, until well into the night.

He liked it. He wanted to use it in his syndicate service, but there was one formidable obstacle: newspaper tradition. One week was a pretty long run for a newspaper serial of the early 1890's—the vogue of the *feuilleton* had not reached America. But Bacheller was willing to run the risk of being an innovator. *The Red Badge of Courage*, while hardly another *Pickwick* for length, could not conclude in a week. But if Crane were willing to compromise by permitting a few excisions, reducing the content to around fifty thousand words, Bacheller would try it on his chain of newspapers.

Crane was willing. The operation was performed, and *The Red Badge of Courage* went out to the thirty or forty newspapers which comprised the Bacheller circuit. Of these perhaps the most noteworthy was the old *Philadelphia Press*, whose editorial destinies were then under the supervision of Talcott Williams, who had learned his trade on the *Springfield Republican* and was later to become the first head of the Pulitzer School of Journalism at Columbia. Williams's literary editor was a young man whose hearty enthusiasm for anything he really liked is to be guessed from his name, which was James O'Grady Duffy. Duffy was ecstatic over *The Red Badge*; so, in less exuberant fashion, was Williams. Would Bacheller bring this Crane down to Philadelphia and exhibit him?

The thing was done, and the resulting tribute was one of the most remarkable ever accorded a young author. As Mr. Bacheller relates in *Coming Up the Road*: "Word flew from

cellar to roof that the great Stephen Crane was in the office. Editors, reporters, compositors, proof-readers crowded around him shaking his hand. It was a revelation of the commanding power of genius."

Riding the tide of this success, Bacheller sent Crane west to write what and where he willed. Before this pilgrimage began, Ripley Hitchcock of Appleton's, in December, 1894, had accepted *The Red Badge of Courage* for book publication. Crane's absence held up its appearance until the following October. It was an immediate sensation, which agreeable phenomenon, as Thomas Beer points out in his thorough study of Crane, was not, as some commentators have it, a result of the impetus provided by flattering English reviews—Heinemann published the book in London in November. Within a year there were fourteen editions in America. *Maggie* was issued with an Appleton imprint and as the work, not of Johnston Smith (who flourished and vanished alike in 1893), but of Stephen Crane. Hard on its heels came *The Little Regiment and Other Episodes of the American Civil War*—half a dozen stories which the success of *The Red Badge* had made worth assembling from the periodicals in which they had first appeared. *George's Mother*, a sort of sequel to *Maggie*, saw the light of day. And up in East Aurora, Elbert Hubbard fêted Stephen and issued as a memento of the occasion Number One of the *Roycroft Quarterly*, a hybrid, *A Souvenir and a Medley: Seven Poems and a Sketch by Stephen Crane*. In the preceding year Cope-land and Day of Boston had put out a volume of Crane's verse, *The Black Riders and Other Lines*.

Crane had arrived, and the romantic career that lay ahead was less romantic than the career that lay behind, for romance inhabits only empty stomachs. Irving Bacheller gave him some seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold to go to Cuba and cover the insurrection. The *Syracuse University Herald* for December, 1896, reported his departure thus: "Mr. Stephen Crane, ex-'94, left New York for Cuba on Friday, November 13, to report the Cuban war news for the *New York Journal*.

He postponed his journey a week in order to defy superstition by starting on a so-called unlucky day."

This statement somewhat anticipated Crane's *Journal* connection, and it is permissible to question that he would be concerned about an ancient superstition, even to the extent of "defying" it. But if he actually did defy it, the superstition got back at him. He reached Jacksonville safely, and from there, on December 29, embarked for Cuba on the steamer *Commodore*. Either by reason of the potency of the superstition, or the *Commodore's* unseaworthiness, or the activities of Spanish plotters (for the tub carried guns, ammunition, and men to aid the struggling Cubans), the *Commodore* sank. Crane, the captain, and two of the crew made up one of the escaping boatloads, and one of the crew perished at the moment of rescue. The incident survived, and will continue to survive, in *The Open Boat*. It has been asserted, and it is wholly possible, that the physical shock of this experience gave initial impetus to the doom that overtook Crane less than three years later.

He did not immediately attempt to reach Cuba again. The New York *Journal* saw a better war in the recrudescence of the age-long feud between Turk and Greek, and thither Crane went, to set eyes on the real thing for the first time, and never again to write about it as he had done in *The Red Badge of Courage*. He married, in Greece, Cora Taylor, whom he had met in Jacksonville, and with the end of hostilities went to England, where he remained until the Spanish-American War superseded the Spanish-Cuban War and gave him at last an opportunity to get to Cuba. He subsequently returned to England, and it was all too evident to his host of friends there that he was desperately ill. In the spring of 1900 he left tardily for Badenweiler, in the Black Forest, but it was too late. He died on June 5, in the latter half of his twenty-ninth year.

§3 For a time it seemed almost as if his fame had died with him. Many of his books went out of print. The revival of interest in him (a revival that bears unquestionable evidence of permanence) seems to date from the World War, and is probably

a result of it. America (and England) began to read *The Red Badge of Courage* with the outbreak of hostilities, and America's own entrance into the war gave the book an enormous impetus here. This very fact, as Vincent Starrett ingeniously points out in his bibliography of Crane, may have a good deal to do with the present rarity of the first edition of *The Red Badge*. When compassionate men and women were ransacking shelves and garrets in response to the American Library Association's appeal for camp reading, what more inevitable than that they should choose copies of *The Red Badge of Courage* if they had them?

Up to recent years *The Red Badge of Courage* presented no great bibliographical problem. But its rapid increase in collector desirability has led to more exhaustive research, and a point has been discovered to divide the first edition into two issues. The final (sixth) line on page 225 begins with the syllables "lated" carried over from "congratu-" on the preceding line. The *d* became mashed and a perfect *d* was patched into the form—and none too delicately, for it is clearly out of alignment. By way of compensation, however, this broken *d* business seems to nullify the prestige of another, proposed, point that had some supporters. Copies of the first edition occur with yellow- and with gilt-top edges, and the suggestion was advanced that the gilt edges were a mark of first issue, on the theory that the publishers cheapened the appearance of the book when it began to be a success. Merle Johnson declared, however, "It seems unlikely that the first edition had a gilt top, as no copies in that state inspected so far have had the proper typographical perfection."

But other important discoveries remained to be made. In 1931 a New York bookseller noted, rather by the unconscious operation of the bookman's intuition than through any deliberate attempt to turn up fresh data, that the title-pages of some copies of the first edition of *The Red Badge of Courage* were from one-fourth to three-eighths of an inch shorter than the title-pages of other copies. Such a discrepancy implied a tipped-

in title, but this was not superficially evident, and the copies in hand were too nearly perfect to warrant ruthless dissection. The bookseller borrowed additional copies from his customers, and eventually assembled the impressive total of seventeen—a quantity normally sufficient for the basing of a bibliographical pronunciamiento. Of the seventeen copies, seven had the full-length titles and ten the shorter—the difference, by the way, is immediately obvious once it is called to one's attention, since the full-length titles are exactly the depth of their neighboring pages. Of the copies with the full titles, each had perfect type on page 225, and in each the first page of advertisements following the text extolled the merits of "Gilbert Parker's Best Books." Of the copies with the shorter titles, each had imperfect type on page 225 and in each the first page of advertisements detailed the merits of *The Red Badge of Courage*, without, however, quoting any reviews of the book—had the advertisement done so, the relative chronological status of these copies would at once have been determined. Vincent Starrett checked another copy for the presence or absence of these particulars, and found that it had a full-length title *and* broken type on page 225; so that one copy out of eighteen examples provides an exception to the rule. Mr. Starrett is conducting further investigations which he plans to embody in a revised edition of his Crane bibliography. In a summary of new Crane data, biographical and bibliographical, published in Part Eight of *The Colophon* (September, 1931), he wrote:

"All I care to say at this time is this: I believe every variant described by Mr. Johnson to be an indubitable part of the first printing. During the press runs, I agree, the type on page 225 was mutilated and, after a time, patched up. I think the point is not highly important. I venture to suggest that the first copy laid on Mr. Appleton's desk—back there in September or October of the year 1895—may have shown a pair of fractured type-faces on page 225. I have already twice suggested that quite possibly pre-publication copies of this rare book exist. Should one come to light, its examination will no doubt prove an in-

teresting adventure to its fortunate possessor; but I shall not readily give over my notion that all copies of *The Red Badge of Courage* dated 1895 are veritable first printings. I think their status, their prestige as such, should not be discounted by reason of type mutilations or differing advertisements at the back. Heaven knows that all copies bearing that date are rare enough."

The cream-yellow binding in which *The Red Badge* was first accoutered has helped the scarcity along, because, as the cloth soils almost in the process of looking at it, copies that approximate external cleanliness are highly difficult of acquisition. Why not red cloth, one is tempted to inquire? But perhaps the designer was trying to maintain the tradition established by *Maggie*.

Two Years Before the Mast

ON THE one hundred and third day out of Boston the brig *Pilgrim* let go her anchor at midnight in forty fathoms of water, and her crew gazed up at the black bulks of mountains that blotted out half the stars. Dawn disclosed, one of them noted, a harbor “nearly landlocked, and at the head of it was a landing-place, protected by a small breakwater of stones, upon which two large boats were hauled up, with a sentry standing over them. Near this was a variety of huts or cottages, nearly an hundred in number, the best of them built of mud and whitewashed, but the greater part only Robinson Crusoe like—of posts and branches of trees.”

Robinson Crusoe-like indeed, for this was Crusoe’s own island. From it, two and a quarter centuries before the *Pilgrim’s* visit, Alexander Selkirk had sailed away with just such emotion in his heart as any prisoner might feel at the end of five years’ servitude that might have been fifty. He reached England two years later to become a nine days’ wonder, and the hullabaloo reached the ears of Daniel Defoe.

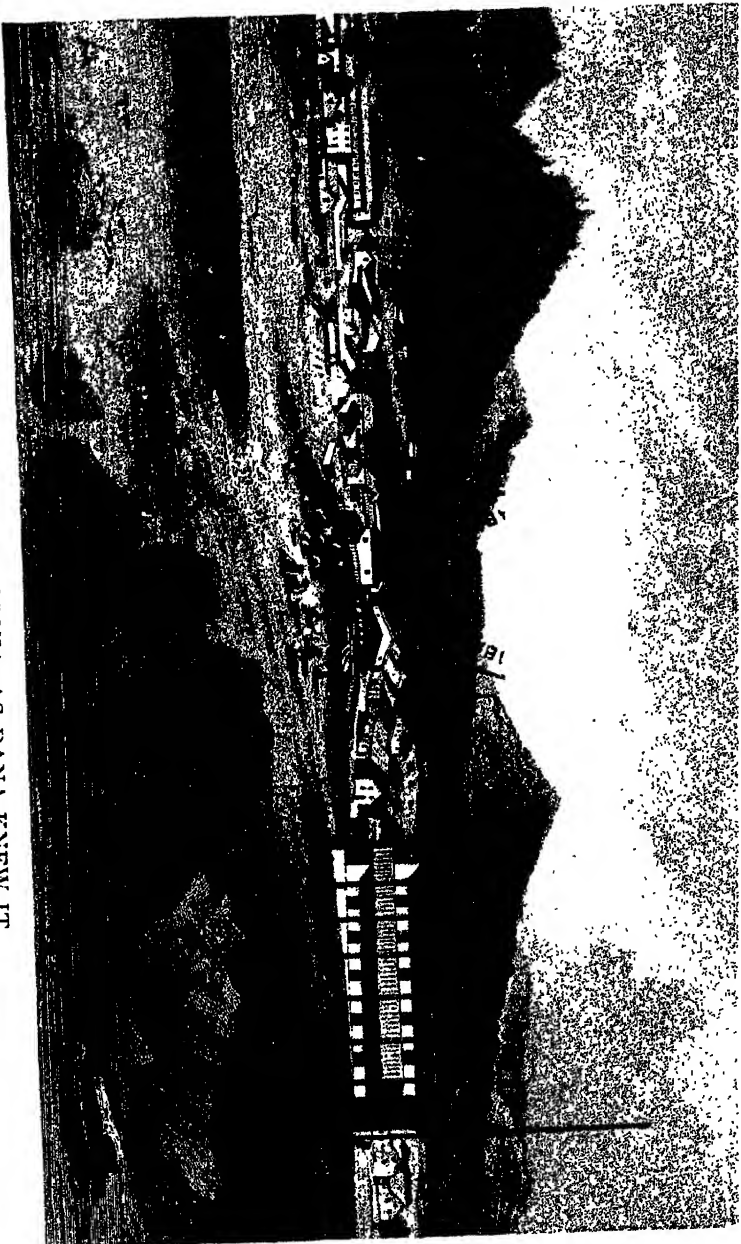
On the morning of the one hundred and fourth day—November 25, 1834—the second mate of the *Pilgrim* took five hands and went ashore to fill the water casks. On one of the five, at least, the sentimental potentialities of the moment could hardly have been lost. His name was Richard Henry Dana, Jr., and this was his first voyage. Some two weeks before it began he had passed his nineteenth birthday. Had all gone well he would now have been a junior at Harvard. But he had contracted measles—an accomplishment that most youths have had placed to their credit before their eighteenth year—and

this had left his eyes so enfeebled that for a time they could ill bear daylight. Improvement came gradually, but it was evident that some time must pass before he could again apply himself to his studies. A sea voyage was suggested, and an opportunity offered to share a cabin in the ship *Japan*, Calcutta bound. Leisure without letters is death—months of idling at sea without the solace of books was a drearier prospect than months of idling about Cambridge and Boston. Dana chose the harder lot—harder and yet easier, for a foremast hand would have little time wherein to bewail the lack of reading. He got a berth on the *Pilgrim*—"after some trouble," he later declared; a Harvard junior presenting himself as a forecabin candidate was evidently an object of suspicion, or of presumed incompetence, or both.

The *Pilgrim* sailed from Boston on August 14, 1834. Exactly three months later, having conquered Cape Horn, she spoke the whaleship *New England*, of the pre-Vassar port of Poughkeepsie. She spent two days at Juan Fernandez, crossed the equator on December 19, and on January 14, 1835, came to anchor "in the spacious bay of Santa Barbara," in the Mexican province of Alta California.

For not quite sixteen months young Dana cruised up and down the coast of California, now on ship, oftener on shore, at the prosaic and arduous business of assembling hides for shipment to New England—hides which, as he whimsically noted, would be made into shoes and brought back to California to be worn out in the pursuit of more hides. On May 8, 1836, having sometime earlier transferred to the ship *Alert*, he sailed for home. The *Alert* reached Boston on September 22, 1836. Her voyage had taken one hundred and thirty-seven days, as against the *Pilgrim's* one hundred and fifty.

§2. The following December Dana returned to Harvard as a senior. At his commencement he read a dissertation "on the unique topic, 'Heaven lies about us in our Infancy,'" reported the aged Dr. John Price, of Brookline, who recorded of him that he was "a handsome youth, and spoke well." Following his



MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA. AS DANA KNEW IT

From a contemporary print. Here hides were assembled by the *Pilgrims*' crew to be sent to New England for manufacture into shoes.

graduation Dana enrolled at the Dane Law School at Cambridge, and at the conclusion of his course, early in 1840, entered the office of Charles G. Loring, of Boston. During his latter days at law school Dana had also acted as instructor in elocution at Harvard, which duties, his biographer, Charles Francis Adams, records, embraced "hearing under-graduates rehearse their exhibition parts for sometimes half a dozen weary hours a day."

Despite the severe demands on his time during these law-school days, Dana contrived to find leisure to put on paper the chronicle of his odyssey to California and back, based on a journal which he had diligently kept, perhaps with no view to publication. The voyage had fulfilled its object—his eye troubles were completely and permanently cured, and he seems never to have worn glasses to the end of his days. Certainly the threefold strain to which he subjected his vision in the years immediately following his return—study, teaching, and composition—was as severe a test of the efficacy of the treatment as anyone might have desired.

The narrative was finished before he left law school, and Dana read it to his father and an uncle by marriage, Washington Allston, poet and painter. Despite the handicap of kinship, they were a highly competent pair of critics. The elder Dana had been one of the founders of the *North American Review*, and had published, among other writings, a volume of verse one unit of which the doughty John Wilson of *Blackwood's Magazine*, who was hard to suit, pronounced "by far the most powerful and original of American poetical compositions"—the qualification American, of course, was something of a dilution. Dana lived to be ninety-one, and his son, who died at sixty-six, was Junior up to within three years of his own death.

The verdict of the two judges was favorable. The manuscript was worth publishing. And who should enjoy the privilege of first refusal? Harpers was suggested, perhaps by the elder Dana. The house was just over twenty years old, having issued its first book in 1818—a frivolous production called *An*

Essay Upon the Human Understanding, by John Locke. In 1833 the firm was altered from J. & J. Harper to Harper and Brothers—four altogether, “either one” (it became a house joke) “the Harper, and the rest the Brothers.”

The manuscript was packed off to William Cullen Bryant in New York—not the benevolent old Father Time of the familiar Sarony portrait, made in 1873, but a man in the middle forties, a poet of established fame, a commentator whose words on whatsoever subject, literature or politics, bore weight, for he was editor of the New York *Evening Post*. It was in Dana's *North American Review* that Bryant's “Thanatopsis,” considerably shorter than the poem as the world knows it today, had originally appeared.

Bryant handed the manuscript to the Harpers, who submitted it to the Reverend Alonzo Potter, vice-president of Union College, the mother of fraternities, at Schenectady, New York, and a Harpers reader. Dr. Potter soon afterward became bishop of Pennsylvania. It is an interesting coincidence (if it is a coincidence; he may very well have been influenced by the narrative) that twenty-five years later Bishop Potter made a journey around Cape Horn for his health, dying on shipboard in the harbor of San Francisco. According to Charles Francis Adams, he once told Dana, whom he met in England, that after reading the manuscript “he had advised its purchase at any price necessary to secure it.”

The Harpers accepted the verdict—exclusive of the “any price” stipulation. Publishing has never been conducted on quite this basis, at least with brand-new authors. The Harpers would buy the manuscript outright, and were willing to pay two hundred and fifty dollars for it. Bryant, who had originally suggested five hundred dollars, battled valiantly on a last line of defense for three hundred, but the Harpers were adamant. Two fifty was all they would give, and two fifty they gave—plus twenty-four free copies.

The firm at the time was enjoying considerable success with Harpers' Family Library, a collection of sturdy little sixteenmos

whose titles embraced every conceivable subject. Number One on the list (actually Nos. 1, 2, and 3, since every volume, even of a single work, had a separate serialization) had been Milman's *History of the Jews*, followed by Lockhart's *Napoleon* and Southey's *Life of Nelson*. Some of the titles were distinctly attractive—as *The Polar Seas, &c., Adventures in Africa*, and *Chivalry and the Crusades*; others seemed (and doubtless were) singularly repellant: *Abercrombie on the Philosophy of the Moral Feelings*, *Pursuit of Knowledge*, and *Upham on Disordered Mental Action*. The Family Library was a hopper into which any sort of mental fodder could be poured, though even from the few titles cited it will be seen that the collection was evidently saddled with the accursed necessity of being "instructive," and that it was designed for the consumption of the honest and multitudinous workingman.

The books that comprised Harpers' Family Library were bound in light tan cloth, lettered on front, back, and spine. Some copies were so issued, that is, but not all. A decorous black cloth, gold lettered, was also used—of the resulting puzzle, more anon. The tan-cloth format was a copy of that used on the older Family Library of the great John Murray. The principal difference between the two was that the Murray books sold for five shillings and the Harper books for fifty cents.

The book was called *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea*. The author's name did not appear on binding or title-page. The first half of Chapter I, however, which served as preface, was signed R. H. D., Jr. and dated Boston, July, 1840; then appeared a subheading, "Departure," and the story was under way. The authorship was hardly a mystery, and was probably not intended to be one. The *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* for October devoted an eighteen-page review to the book, and the footnote which gave the title and publisher's name added: "This work is ascribed to Richard H. Dana, jun." The notice itself confidently described the author as "a youth of promising talents and excellent character, the son of an eminent poet."

Two Years Before the Mast did well from the start. As late as 1847 it was in second place at the New York Public Library among books in demand, yielding first honors only to Miss Catherine Sedgwick. Edward Moxon issued a London edition in 1841, and paid Dana "a sum of money larger than the Harpers had given him for the manuscript," according to Adams. One pleasant instance of the book's popularity, and an impressive tribute to the lucid simplicity of its style, was the fact that portions of the text were early adopted for oculist's eye charts, and are still so used. A result of the chronicle's popular acceptance was an access of clients to the Boston law office—hard-bitten seafolk, many of them, able to pay little, but certain of the soundest advice to be had at that or any price. For the man they consulted had eaten their bread and salt, and knew a royal studding sail from a flying jib boom.

Not quite a year after the appearance of *Two Years Before the Mast* Dana married. The young lady, Miss Sarah Watson, unfortunately for the romantic verities, had not been left behind him when the *Pilgrim* set out from Boston. Her future husband did not meet her until 1839; they were married in Hartford in 1841.

The story of Dana's subsequent career, an honorable and distinguished one, is available in detail, much of it in his own words (he was an indefatigable journal keeper), in the Adams biography already mentioned.

In 1859 and 1860, by advice of his physician, he sailed round the world, reaching the West Coast this time by way of Panama instead of Cape Horn. He took passage in the clipper ship *Mastiff* from San Francisco for the Sandwich Islands, and five days out the vessel took fire. Fortunately the British ship *Achilles* was at hand; otherwise there would have been no Author's Edition of *Two Years Before the Mast*, in 1869, with the added chapter "Twenty-Four Years After" which is unaccountably omitted from so many reprints.

The Danas were in Rome at the end of 1881 when Mr. Dana contracted pneumonia. On January 6, 1882, he died, and was

buried in the Protestant Cemetery, on the same hillside where rest the ashes of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. "Here," smiled Keats, "lies one whose name was writ in water." He erred gloriously, but Dana might have accepted the epitaph literally. For his fame is sure so long as land-bred pulses quicken at the thought of "the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking."

§3. The bibliographical puzzle resulting from the Jekyll and Hyde binding of *Two Years Before the Mast* has not yet been resolved, and does not appear to need resolving. In 1853 the Harper establishment suffered the disastrous fire already described in these pages in the paper on *Moby-Dick*, and thus vanished every record that might have thrown light on the matter. The tan binding possesses the advantage (or disadvantage) of existing in at least two states. In one state the serialization on the back cover ends with *Travels of Mungo Park* (No. 105), *Two Years Before the Mast* being No. 106. In the other the numbers run on to 121 and embrace six more titles. Logic would give the 105-state precedence, but no man living can take oath on the business. Indeed, the remote possibility exists that some copies could have been issued on which the serial numbers did not run as far as 105—often, in serial libraries (the Tauchnitz, sometimes), the listing of previous titles does not extend up to the book in which the list is published.

And here is an added complication that may have some bearing on the numbers puzzle. Volumes LXXV and LXXVI in Harpers' Family Library were Volumes One and Two, respectively, of James K. Paulding's *Life of Washington*, dated 1835 on both titles and 1836 on both covers. One collector reports a set bearing an identical owner's name on each flyleaf—a "pure," not a made-up, set. On the back cover of Volume One the list extends through No. 78 in the Family Library, No. 27 in the Classical Series, and No. 27 in the Boys' and Girls' Library; on the back cover of Volume Two, through No. 73 in the Family Library, No. 17 in the Classical Series, and No. 25 in the Boys' and Girls' Library, and includes in addition four titles in the

Theological Library. Yet the two volumes clearly left the publisher's shelves as a unit, and were so sold to the original owner. Obviously this business of the numbers is a problem regarding which it were not the part of wisdom to be dictatorial.

An inquiry addressed to Dana's son, Richard Henry Dana (1851–1931), a few months before his death, elicited this datum on the problem of the bindings: "I do not know the exact date of the publication in 1840, but I have found the edition in black cover, with my father's signature in it, and many corrections made by his father and brother, Edmund, and I think this must be one of the two dozen printed copies given him, in addition to the two-hundred and fifty dollars."

P. K. Foley, of Boston, dean of bibliographical authorities on the works of nineteenth-century New England authors, wrote Arthur Swann, of New York, that many years ago he had made this note: "'Dana. Two Years. Thomas Waterman's copy—black cloth—bears date of acquisition, September 26, 1840—Dana's Preface is dated July 1840.' . . . Mr. Waterman's collection of contemporary American literature ranked first in Boston, and you can safely bet his bookseller lost no time in supplying a copy from his first consignment."

He added what can safely be taken as the most logical way to view the matter: "Personally my conclusion has been—and is—that the color of binding, black or white, is no evidence of priority. Styles and colors whether in 1840 or 1920 appear to me dictated by the bookseller who had in mind the preferences of customers. Just recall the various shades and colors, none denoting priority—of the countless issues of New York and Boston, in the sixties and seventies! And dear Uncle Tom, whose raiment put to shame the many colors of Joseph's famous coat!"

Mr. Dana in his letter supplied also important information on the question of the famous two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar payment and on his father's opinion of the book:

"As to the feelings towards Harpers, my father never entertained bitter feelings. I have heard him tell the story, but more

as a humorous one than as a ground for complaint. I remember him saying in particular that when Alonzo Potter met him abroad and said how he had read "Two Years Before the Mast" before anyone else outside the immediate family, because he had read it for Harpers, and how he had advised the publishers to purchase the book at any price necessary to secure it, my father said, 'Do you think that the success of the book has led you to think you recommended it more highly than you did at the time, because Harpers said the reader had only given a very moderate recommendation for the book?' Bishop Potter said, 'No, I remember it very clearly, almost to the very words, because I knew the Dana family and was so much struck with the story myself.' I think my father had a little pleasure in one side of the story, in that [Fletcher?] Harper belonged to one of the sects which made a great deal of prayer meetings, revivals, experience meetings, sudden conversions, and much emotion, while my father, as an Episcopalian, believed less in those things than in carrying out Christian principles in life.

"You say you would like my father's opinion of the book. The only thing I remember his saying, and he said it, I think, twice in my presence, was that he believed his reputation would rest upon this book, which he threw off as a young man, rather than on his trial of the prize cause, and notes on international law, which represented the best work of which he was capable."

Mr. Dana the Younger himself edited the most satisfactory edition textually of his father's classic, and this appeared in 1911 with the imprint of Houghton Mifflin Company. It included not only the supplementary chapter, "Twenty-four Years After," already referred to, but also another supplement, "Seventy-six Years After," by the son. The text proper is that of the 1869 edition, which is preferable to that of the original edition in that names are inserted where blanks appeared before. Thereby the brutal captain of the *Pilgrim* is identified for posterity, and the names of Dana's associates on the famous argosy are set down to make the roster of an immortal crew.

Emerson's Essays

OF THE GREAT CLUSTER of nineteenth-century writers who constitute the New England group, only one was born in Boston. Poe, of course, was a native Bostonian, but this fact is of no more esthetic or cultural significance than the fact that Thackeray was born in Calcutta. It would be fully as just, on the same hypothesis, to call Whitman a New Englander, for Whitman was a native of Long Island, and Long Island, geologically, is merely a slice of Connecticut gone wrong.

Lowell and Holmes were born in Cambridge, Thoreau in Concord, Hawthorne in Salem, Whittier in Haverhill, Longfellow in Portland—and even though Maine, at the moment, was part of Massachusetts, still Portland was hardly a suburb of Boston. Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on Summer Street, Boston, in 1803, anticipating the next oldest of the group by one year, and the youngest by sixteen.

It was the casualness of domestic economy that ordained Poe's birth in Boston, and the same is true of Emerson. They were children of fathers who had chosen the two most peripatetic professions—Poe's the stage, Emerson's the ministry. In 1799 the First Church of Boston summoned the Reverend William Emerson from his pastorate at Harvard—the village of Harvard, Massachusetts, not Harvard College, for the two are tolerably far apart as distance is measured in New England. The First Church offered, among other inducements, a salary more than twice as large as Mr. Emerson had been receiving at Harvard. He was to get fourteen dollars a week, the parish dwelling house, and twenty cords of wood. Ten years later his stipend had grown to twenty-five hundred dollars a year and

thirty cords of wood. His son's biographer, James Elliot Cabot, relates that in the garden attached to his dwelling the minister was able to raise his own potatoes, corn, and peas. One could do such things then on Summer Street, Boston.

In May, 1811, at the age of forty-two, William Emerson died, leaving a widow and six children, all the children being under ten years old. The First Church, acting evidently on the noble theory that charity should begin in the house of God, continued to pay her late husband's salary to Mrs. Emerson for six months, and then, according to Cabot (who belongs to that blessed school of biographers who do not scorn the essential details of household finance), "voted to pay her five hundred dollars a year for seven years, and also to give her the use of the parish house for a year and a half"—actually she stayed there twice that long.

In that elder day the sheer problem of existence could somehow have been solved on this basis. But Ruth Haskins Emerson had other plans for her children than that they should simply grow up, and so did Aunt Mary Emerson, who declared that her nephews were "born to be educated." The most familiar incident of Emerson's childhood affords pitiful witness to the desperate state of the fatherless little flock. He and his brother Edward shared a single overcoat, turn and turn about. Cabot tells how a friend, visiting the family, "found them without food, and Miss Emerson consoling them with stories of heroic endurance." Aunt Mary was herself of the stuff of heroes if not of psychologists—how might it comfort an empty stomach to learn that Homer begged his bread?

Thanks to the application of such rigid economies as their mother and Aunt Mary were certainly competent to devise, William, the oldest son, was able to enter Harvard, and in 1817 Ralph Waldo followed him. If ever student earned his way through college, Emerson did. By serving as "President's freshman" (a sort of glorified errand boy) he received free lodging; by waiting on table in the commons he was able to reduce his board bill seventy-five per cent; he tutored; he enjoyed scholar-

ship aid. Any money over and above his needs (and doubtless some that came under his needs) could be put to excellent use at home. A windfall in the form of a thirty-dollar declamation prize he turned over to his mother in the sentimental hope that she might buy a shawl or some such tangible and definite memento of his prowess; obviously he had too much tact and affection to suggest such a procedure openly, which was well, since the prize was forthwith passed along to a presumably unsympathetic baker—bread must come before purple and fine Parsley, and high thinking pay for plain living.

After Harvard came an interlude of teaching. Emerson was making time—communing with himself and his books, content to endure for a while in that atmosphere of false security which surrounds every young man or woman just out of college who contrives to find some gainful occupation, however mean the situation, however meager the reward. The four years that followed Emerson's graduation from Harvard offer several parallels with the four years that followed Hawthorne's graduation from Bowdoin; Emerson's quadriennium of drift ended, however, about the time Hawthorne's began. He returned to Harvard as a student of divinity.

Why the ministry? Oliver Wendell Holmes summed up the reasons thus: "Descended from a long line of ministers, a man of spiritual nature, a reader of Plato, of Augustine, of Jeremy Taylor, full of hope for his fellow-men, and longing to be of use to them, conscious, undoubtedly, of a growing power of thought, it was natural that Emerson should turn from the task of a school-master to the higher office of a preacher. It is hard to conceive of Emerson in either of the other so called learned professions. His devotion to truth for its own sake and his feeling about science would have kept him out of both those dusty highways."

In 1829 Emerson was ordained minister of the Second Church at Boston—"Old North," from whose bellry Paul Revere had read the message of the lanterns half a century before. The resignation of the senior minister a short time later left Emer-

son in full charge. In the fall of 1832 he himself resigned. The incident is familiar despite the total lack of any of the trappings that go to make a scene. Emerson and his congregation parted company with dignity and affection on both sides, purely as a result of Emerson's intellectual honesty toward the question of the Lord's Supper and his utter inability, once he had reasoned the matter to a conclusion, to continue his pastorate under false colors. In the preceding February his wife of less than two and a half years, Ellen Louisa Tucker, had died of the consumption with which she had been touched from before their marriage.

On Christmas Day, 1832, Emerson sailed for the Mediterranean on board the tiny brig *Jasper*. He was in need of whatever physical and spiritual benefits the voyage and his subsequent journeying might provide him; he was back in Boston the following October, having visited Italy, France, England, and Scotland in the interval and initiated a lifelong friendship with Carlyle. That a man of Emerson's slender means should have been able to enjoy such a holiday is not matter for wonder; twelve years later an enterprising youth named Bayard Taylor would spend nearly two years covering much more ground than Emerson did at a total expense, duly itemized in *Views A-foot* (1846), of four hundred and seventy-two dollars.

Home again, Emerson supplied various pulpits and lectured. He and his mother moved to Concord. In 1835 he married Miss Lydia Jackson; he suggested, and she approved the suggestion, that she alter her first name as well as her last, and she became, for euphony's sake, Lidian Emerson. He himself sometime before had abandoned the Ralph of his youth in favor of Waldo. They made their home in Concord, and here Emerson passed the rest of his life, himself the center of that circle whose names are immortally associated with the village.

§2. The ten years from 1835 to 1845 Mr. Cabot calls the period of Emerson's greatest productivity, and adds, "That it took the shape of lectures was due very much to circumstances, and not to his will." The platform was the obvious and immediate means of livelihood. Beyond those two recommendations



EMERSON'S HOME AT CONCORD

From a photograph by Charles Phelps Cushing accenting a telephone wire which was not available in the sage's day.

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it had little to offer financially. Emerson received from ten dollars and expenses for appearing before a rural lyceum to fifty dollars, or even something more, for addressing a Boston audience. In the summer of 1839 he wrote his brother William in New York: "I see plainly I shall have no choice about lecturing again this winter. I must do it. Here in Concord they send me my tax-bill for the current year, \$161 73." In 1847 he declared that the most he had ever received for ten lectures was five hundred and seventy dollars.

There is an abundance of firsthand testimony to Emerson's platform manner. He seems to have been a better lecturer than preacher. "Noted for the amiability of his disposition, the strictness of his morals, and attention to his duties, he became, on these accounts, the idol of his congregation," declared George Gilfillan. "His preaching, however, was not generally popular, nor did it deserve to be. Our informant declared, that while Dr. Channing was the most, Emerson was the least popular minister in Boston, and confessed that he never heard him preach a first-rate sermon till his last, in which he informed his congregation that he could conscientiously preach to them no more."

The fault here may have been with "our informant"; there was a traditional manner of preaching a sermon to which Emerson was too much Emerson to conform, and the nonconformity confused the traditionalists. But the broader individualism which the lecture platform permitted him created a uniformly striking impression, born not of histrionic eccentricities but of the sheer impressiveness of the speaker's personality. The *New World* of New York sent a representative to hear Emerson on "Domestic Life" before the Mercantile Library Association on February 28, 1843, and an account of the occasion, with an admirable summary of the address, appeared in the succeeding issue. "Mr. Emerson," said the reporter, "has a delivery which seems to have grown naturally out of his style of thought and expression, so beautifully is it adapted to it. His voice is rich, melodious and of good compass, though little variety; his usual tone is rather above that of ordinary conversation, though it

often falls abruptly, but with pleasing and impressive effect, farther below it. There is about it a musical monotony which gives his discourse the impression of a sweetly chanted stately poem, in which the beauty of the voice and of the style blend closely with strange, heart-touching eloquence of sentiment and of thought. He uses little gesticulation, and that rather sudden and ungraceful, perfectly unstudied, and prompted solely by the feeling he utters. An expressive countenance, with a soft, dreamy eye cast slowly and mildly around, and now and then at the expression of a beautiful thought, resting for a long moment unmovedly upon some one point, as if gazing upon the sentiment just clothed in words, and then withdrawn with a start as from a trance."

Seven years later Nathaniel Parker Willis heard Emerson lecture at the same place. He arrived to find the hall crowded, and no space left, even for a Willis, save "against the farthest wall." Moreover, "a row of unsheltered gas-lights blazed between us and the pulpit, with one at either ear-tip of the occupant, drowning the expression of his face completely." Willis found that "to look at him at all was to do so with needles through the eyes; and we take the trouble to define this, by way of a general protest against the unshaded gas-burners of the Tabernacle, Stuyvesant Institute, and other public rooms—where an ophthalmia is very likely to be added to the bad air and hard seats."

Willis admitted that he had often had opportunities to hear Emerson before—he could "remember him perfectly, as a boy whom we used to see playing about Chauncey Place and Summer-Street—one of those pale little moral-sublimes, with their shirt collars turned over, who are recognized by Boston school-boys as having 'fathers that are Unitarians.'" But Willis had deliberately avoided Emerson's platform appearances, in the belief that he would encounter "but a new addition to the prevailing Boston beverage of Channing-and-water." Like Mrs. Sigourney, Willis always had a pen in his hand and a sheet of paper under it and never threw the paper away; in the present

instance he is to be commended for his thrift as well as for his readiness to admit his delighted disillusionment:

"Emerson's voice is up to his reputation. It has a curious contradiction, which we tried in vain to analyze satisfactorily—an outwardly repellant and inwardly reverential mingling of qualities, which a musical composer would despair of blending into one. It bespeaks a life that is half contempt, half adoring recognition, and very little between. But it is noble, altogether. And what seems strange is to hear such a voice proceeding from such a body. It is a voice with shoulders in it which he has not—with lungs in it far larger than his—with a walk in it which the public never see—with a fist in it which his own hand never gave him the model for—and with a gentleman in it which his parochial and 'bare-necessaries-of-life' sort of exterior gives no other betrayal of. We can imagine nothing in nature—which seems, too, to have a type for everything)—like the want of correspondence between the Emerson that goes in at the eye and the Emerson that goes in at the ear. . . .

"He works with surprises. A man who should make a visit of charity, and, after expressing all proper sympathy, should bid adieu to the poor woman, leaving her very grateful for his kind feelings, but should suddenly return, after shutting the door, and give her a guinea, would produce just the effect of his most electric sentences. You do not observe it in reading, because you withhold the emphasis till you come to the key-word. But, in delivery, his cadences tell you that the meaning is given, and the interest of the sentence all over, when—flash!—comes a single word or phrase, like lightning after listened-out thunder, and illuminates with astonishing vividness, the cloud you have striven to see into."

Julian Hawthorne would later recall that Emerson's voice "had a strange power, which affected me more than any other voice I ever heard on the stage or on the platform. It was pure thought translated into purely intellectual tone, the perfect music of spiritual utterance. It is impossible to read his verses adequately without bearing in mind his peculiar accent and

emphasis; and some of the grandest and most uplifting passages in his prose lose much of their effect unless the reader can recall the tones of his voice."

A more subtle observer—Henry James the Elder—has set down a memorable impression. Emerson's platform demeanor, he recorded, "was modesty itself: not the mere absence of display, but the presence of a positive personal grace. His deferential entrance upon the scene, his look of inquiry at the desk and the chair, his resolute rummaging among his embarrassed papers, the air of sudden recollection with which he would plunge into his pockets for what he must have known had never been put there, his uncertainty and irresolution as he rose to speak, his deep, relieved inspiration as he got well from under the burning-glass of his auditors' eyes, and addressed himself at length to their docile ears instead: no maiden ever appealed more potently to your enamoured and admiring sympathy. And then when he looked over the heads of his audience into the dim mysterious distance, and his weird monotone began to reverberate in your bosom's depths, and his words flowed on, now with a river's volume, grand, majestic, free, and anon diminished themselves to the fitful cadence of a brook, impeded in its course, and returning in melodious coquetry upon itself, and you saw the clear eye eloquent with nature's purity, and beheld the musing countenance turned within, as it were, and hearkening to the rumour of a far-off but oncoming world: how intensely personal, how exquisitely characteristic, it all was!"

The phrase "embarrassed papers" was no figure of speech—John Townsend Trowbridge, in *My Own Story*, that highly entertaining compendium of well-organized and faithfully reported anecdotal reminiscences of the golden age of New England letters, wrote that Emerson "was at times amusingly careless with his manuscript, losing his place and searching for it with stoical indifference to his patiently waiting audience,—'up to my old tricks,' as I once heard him say, when he was an unusually long time shuffling the misplaced leaves. He had the same habit that marked his conversation, of seeming often to

pause and hesitate before coming down with force upon the important word. His voice was a pure baritone, and a perfect vehicle for his thought, which in great and happy moments imparted to it a quality I never heard in any other human speech."

§3. But despite its financial drawbacks, lecturing paid better than writing. In the spring of 1841—that is, in the very middle of the productive period which Cabot defines—appeared an externally unimpressive book called *Essays*, by R. W. Emerson. For a parallel of title-page simplicity one must turn to Poe's *Tales*. If this austerity and restraint were designed to keep the book from attracting wide attention, the ruse succeeded. Rarely has classic been ushered into the world with fewer trumpets and banners. What sale it enjoyed was doubtless in large measure the natural consequence of Emerson's lecture appearances. This probability, at least, would help to account for the appearance of *Essays: Second Series* three years later.

Each series bore the imprint of James Munroe and Company, which house builded better than it knew. In 1849 it was to introduce Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* to one of the most restricted groups of readers that ever greeted durable book—a group restricted, indeed, to fewer than three hundred individual components, a fourth of whom had their copies direct from the author. Four years (computed by title dates) after issuing *Essays: Second Series*, James Munroe and Company brought out Emerson's *Poems*, and two years later *Nature: Addresses, and Lectures*—and at this point James Munroe and Company lose their association with Emerson and also with Thoreau. When a new edition of *Nature: Addresses, and Lectures* appeared in 1850 it carried the imprint of Phillips, Sampson and Company. When the *Essays* first appeared in a two-volume uniform edition, also in 1850, they bore the same imprint. Phillips, Sampson and Company survived to establish the *Atlantic Monthly*.

The first issue of the original *Essays* should not have the designation "First Series" on the backstrip. Authorities have differed on this point, but the consensus of present-day opinion

favors the omission, and logic applauds the consensus—why label anything “First Series” when a second does not yet exist? The second series is properly so designated on the backstrip, in one form *2d*, in another *Second*, and priority has not yet been determined. This 1844 volume has indeed a peculiarity: the folios for pages 257 and 258 are omitted, page 259 following page 256. There is no break in the text, however. The first series has a half-title, the second none. The bindings of the two series are not uniform, and there is a slight but noticeable difference in height, both of which facts mean nothing except that the two volumes were not issued as a set. Neither volume can be called a typographical triumph; the 'forties may have been fabulous, but this quality did not extend as far as the esthetics of book production. The two series were not issued in a single volume until 1865, when they appeared as a unit in the popular Blue and Gold series of Ticknor and Fields.

§4. The two volumes of *Essays* proved a more potent influence for Emerson's fame abroad than they did at home. The first series appeared in London late in 1841 with a preface by Carlyle, and the second, also sponsored by Carlyle, toward the end of 1844. There was a French translation in 1851 and a German in 1858. The title-page of the first English edition, published by James Fraser, identified the author as “R. W. Emerson, of Concord, Massachusetts;” that of the French translation as “Ralph Emerson, citoyen des Etats-Unis d'Amérique.”

Carlyle's preface to the original London edition of the first series—“not the great reading public, but only the small thinking public, and perhaps only a portion of these, have any question to ask concerning it”—is much more familiar than his preface to the second series, but the latter is of particular significance as a footnote to any history of publishing:

“Here is a new volume of *Essays* by Emerson; concerning which I am to certify, that this English edition of them seems to be correctly printed; that the English Publisher [John Chapman] is one appointed by the Author himself, and is made under contract with him as to the pecuniary results. . . . To

unauthorized reprinters, and adventurous spirits inclined to do a little in the pirate line, it may be proper to recall the known fact, which should be very present to us all without recalling, that *theft* in any sort is abhorrent to the mind of man;—that theft is theft, under whatsoever meridian of longitude, in whatever 'nation,' foreign or domestic. the man stolen from may live. . . .

"More on this paltry department of the business, I had not to say; and to touch on any other department of it was not in my commission at present. I will wish the brave Emerson a fair welcome among us again; and leave him to speak to his old friends, and to make new."

In the autumn of 1847 Emerson sailed for a lecture tour in England and Scotland, to remain abroad for two years. The voyage from Boston to Liverpool on the packet *Washington Irving* took only eighteen days—a handsome improvement over the little *Jasper's* forty between Boston and Malta fifteen years before. In Liverpool, he wrote Lidian, he found a letter from Carlyle at Chelsea addressed to "R.W.E., on the instant he lands in England"—a letter "conveying so hearty a welcome and so urgent an invitation to house and hearth that I could no more resist than I could gravitation." Accordingly "I came hither on Monday, and, at ten at night, the door was opened to me by Jane Carlyle, and the man himself was behind her with a lamp in the entry. They were very little changed from their old selves of fourteen years ago. . . . 'Well,' said Carlyle, 'here we are, shovelled together again.' The floodgates of his talk are quickly opened, and the river is a great and constant stream. We had large communication that night until nearly one o'clock, and at breakfast next morning it began again."

Did Emerson here have to forego his favorite breakfast concomitant? New Englanders, says a tradition of such ancient standing that it is never likely to die out regardless of the adduction of whatsoever impressive evidence to the contrary, habitually have pie for breakfast. The explanation for the persistence of this belief is not far to seek. New England frugality,

a characteristic acquired in the sparse and rugged winters when the Massachusetts Bay Colony was struggling to survive, once demanded that the morrow's breakfast should consist of the leftovers from today's supper, in strict and perennial rotation, so that if one saw Monday's sun descend on a pie tin that still sheltered half a pie, that half a pie automatically must be among the initiatory items of Tuesday's schedule. Even in New England one might fare worse. Edmund Pearson has recalled with gusto—the gusto of the narrative artist rather than of the gourmet—the breakfast which Mr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Borden consumed at Fall River, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1892, the last meal of their lives. There was cold mutton, mutton broth, johnny cake, cookies, and, thank Heaven, coffee. Pie would have been a mercy.

In 1871 Emerson would journey to California, and among the party was Professor James B. Thayer, who subsequently published a short account of the excursion. Professor Thayer was not among that company of pompous or stupid commentators who omit trivia, and Holmes was glad to pay him tribute for his Boswellian meticulousness and to detail the following incident in Professor Thayer's own words:

"At breakfast we had, among other things, pie. This article at breakfast was one of Mr. Emerson's weaknesses. A pie stood before him now. He offered to help somebody from it, who declined; and then one or two others, who also declined; and then Mr. —; he too declined. 'But Mr. —!' Mr. Emerson remonstrated, with humorous emphasis, thrusting the knife under a piece of the pie, and putting the entire weight of his character into his manner,—'but Mr. —, *what is pie for?*' "

For breakfast, obviously. Holmes relates on his own account another Emerson-and-pie incident which apparently does not concern a breakfast: "A near friend of mine, a lady, was once in the cars with Emerson, and when they stopped for the refreshment of the passengers he was very desirous of procuring something from the station for her solace. Presently he advanced upon her with a cup of tea in one hand and a wedge

of pie in the other,—such a wedge! She could hardly have been more dismayed if one of Caesar's *cunei*, or wedges of soldiers, had made a charge against her!"

And Holmes continues, writing alike as physician, humorist, humanist, and critic: "Yet let me say here that pie, often foolishly abused, is a good creature, at the right time and in angles of thirty or forty degrees. In semi-circles and quadrants it may sometimes prove too much for delicate stomachs. But here was Emerson, a hopelessly confirmed pie eater, never, so far as I remember, complaining of dyspepsia; and there, on the other side, was Carlyle, feeding largely on wholesome oatmeal, groaning with indigestion all his days, and living with half his self-consciousness habitually centred beneath his diaphragm."

One may be certain, however, that, New Englander though he was, the Autocrat himself sensibly forbore to admit pie to his own breakfast table.

The Biglow Papers

SENATOR JOHN PAUL ROBINSON was no kin (or only at long remove) of that other John Robinson the speedy utterance of whose name passes current as the symbol of instantaneity. Born the year of Washington's death, he survived to within a year of Lincoln's, representing his home city of Lowell in the Massachusetts legislature during five terms, and being elected to the State senate from Middlesex County in 1836—the year that established "Little Van" as heir to the rugged traditions of Jacksonian Democracy.

In the campaign of 1847 Senator Robinson created something of a stir by announcing that he would support Caleb Cushing for governor. Cushing, a noted lawyer in an era when competition in the forensic field was keen, had been active in politics for more than twenty years, abandoning the Whigs for the Democrats with the elevation of John Tyler to the chief magistracy following the death of "the President of a Month," William Henry Harrison. With the opening of hostilities against Mexico, Cushing, loyal to his new principles, organized a regiment at his own expense, was chosen its colonel, and set out for the border. The Democrats of his State nominated him for the governorship while he was following General Winfield Scott from Vera Cruz to Mexico City.

His opponent was George Nixon Briggs, the eleventh child of a blacksmith who had fought at Bennington under Molly Stark's husband. Briggs, self-taught save for a year of elementary schooling, had risen to merited prominence in politics, serving twelve years in Congress as a Democrat, and going over to the Whigs with the ascendancy of Henry Clay following the

accession of Tyler. Clay was the identical rock on which the opinions of Caleb Cushing had split. It is a confusing picture, but one thoroughly typical of the epoch. In that time of turmoil the issues were too complex, too ramified, for humble or even for great men to resolve them overnight—it would take four years of war to do that, a sterner war than that which carried the boundaries of the United States to the shores of the Pacific. And of the issues the foremost was slavery, with anti-slavery extremists hating antislavery moderates (as extremists in any cause invariably do) far more than they hated opponents.

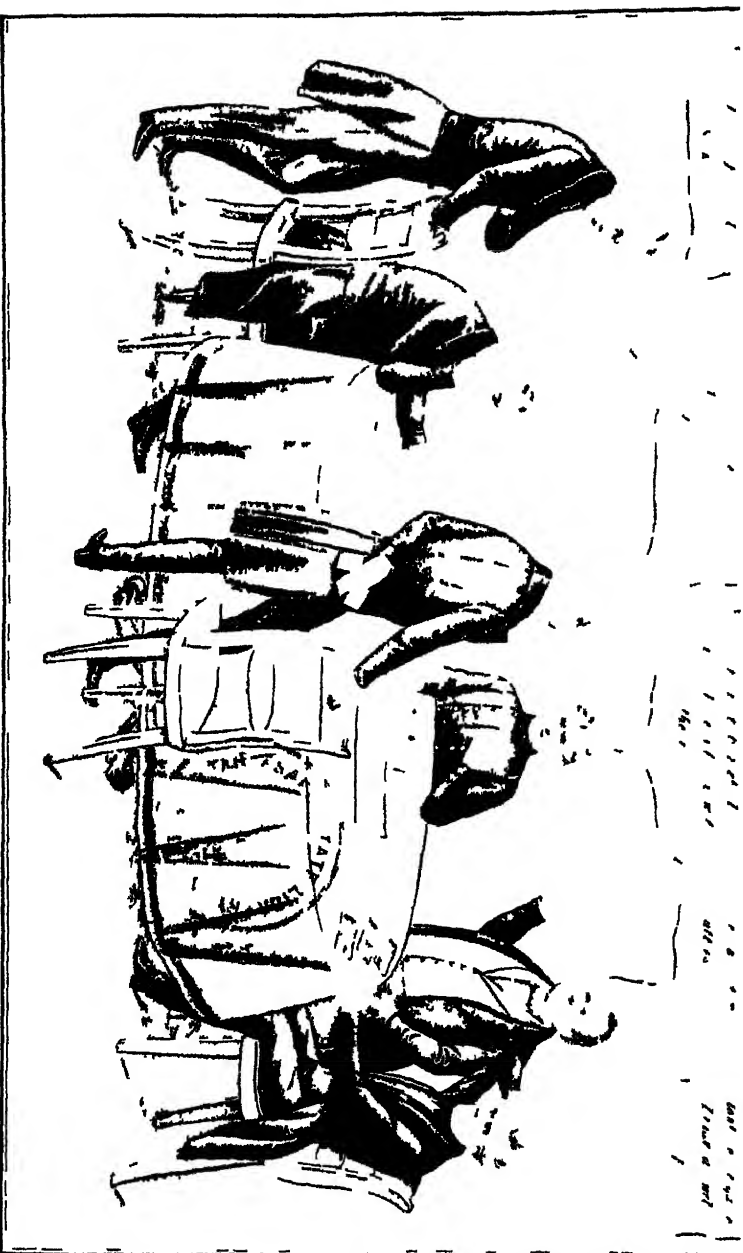
Senator Robinson's support of General Cushing—the colonel had been elevated to a brigadiership in Mexico—did neither of them any good. Cushing was beaten by some fourteen thousand votes in a day when that figure represented a substantial preponderance of the Massachusetts electorate. Of considerable weight in the campaign were some verses, "What Mr. Robinson Thinks," which had appeared in the *Boston Courier* for November 2, 1847. They took the public fancy so effectively that, unlike most political satire, they have lived on ever since, pillorying the hapless Senator Robinson in the shackles of assumed immortality. The first of the nine stanzas read:

Guvener B. is a sensible man;
 He stays to his home an' looks arter his folks,
 He draws his furrer ez straight ez he can,
 An' into nobody's tater-patch pokes,—
 But John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B.

The third stanza enshined this characterization of Governor B's opponent:

General C. is a dieffle smart man—
 He's ben on all sides thet gives places or pelf,
 But consistency still wuz a part of his plan,—
 He's been true to *one* party,—an' thet is himself

The injustice of this taunt should be pointed out in passing, Cushing and Briggs were both men of high principles. And in



THE POLITICAL JACKPOT OF 1848

It is a collection of very little in the collection of the New York Historical Society. It is one of the papers in the Presidential Antiquities and is in the collection of the six-volume President.

defense of the author of "What Mr. Robinson Thinks" it should be pointed out as well that he maintained political argument on a far more elevated plane than was the wont of the times, never deigning to descend to the hearty bad manners or the forthright scurrility which presumably passed for inspired rationalism in the noisy battle of the ballots.

§2. Bad manners and scurrility were hardly in the author's pedigree, for he was a Lowell—a fact that was not baldly disclosed in print at the time, but which was nevertheless a pretty wide open secret. The aloofness of the Lowells is itself part and parcel of the Puritan tradition; a familiar stanza no more just than that which stigmatized the alleged self-centeredness of Caleb Cushing sets them only a little lower than the Cabots, and the Cabots somewhat above the angels. The Cabots, to be sure, reached the American mainland nearly a century and a half in advance of the first migrating Lowell, who, a parvenu of 1639, might have been, and perhaps was, welcomed by a Hawthorne, a Bryant, a Bancroft, a Parkman, and even (if he fared a little to the south) an upstart Whitman. All the Lowells who preceded James Russell were men of mark—judges, educators, ministers. An uncle was honored by the bestowal of his name on the city which would later send John P. Robinson to the State legislature.

James Russell Lowell was born in Cambridge in 1819 and fifteen years later took the short walk that made him a Harvard undergraduate. He received his degree in 1838, though not in person, as the college authorities a few months earlier had insisted on a brief period of rustication for disciplinary reasons—an indignity which did not interfere with his election as class poet. Lowell then studied law for two years, was admitted to the bar, and might never have been heard of again if he had hewed to this obvious line of most resistance. Instead, he began writing prose and verse, mainly verse, and in 1841 published his first book (the class poem excepted), *A Year's Life*. At the end of 1843 there appeared another collection, *Poems*, and Lowell was well launched on the sea of letters.

Many a youth whose doom would come at Shiloh or Antietam or Gettysburg had not yet been born, but the slavery question was already the great battleground of American politics, and Lowell threw himself into the discussion with all the ardor of his energetic spirit. He brought to the fray a weapon with which no other important ally or antagonist had so far been equipped—a sense of humor. It reached its fullest fruition in the series of satiric utterances—prose, poetry, or a mixture of the two—which in 1846 began to appear in Joseph T. Buckingham's *Boston Courier*. Buckingham and his son Edward, founder of the *New England Magazine*, will merit later portrayal in these papers, for it was in the son's publication that the two original and subsequently rejected components of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* appeared. There was a certain kinship of method, though not of substance, between the *Breakfast-Table* contributions and *The Biglow Papers*, under which title Lowell's *Courier* satires were assembled toward the close of 1848.

Lowell's literary productivity extended from 1838 to 1891, the year of his death. Some thirty books were the product of that half-century and more, plus nine or ten of substantial size that have been assembled since 1891. Yet the three Lowell titles that remain most familiar and most read were all issued, and in good part written, in 1848. The statistics appear even more remarkable when it is recalled that less than two months separated the publication of the first of the three from the publication of the last.

First in order of appearance came *A Fable for Critics*, with its rhymed title-page, the hilarity of which the printer augmented by leaving out part of a line, botching the rhyme scheme gloriously. Repairs were quickly made, and one of the happiest and most authentic points in American bibliography had been created. The book carried its intended publication date on the title-page: "Set forth in October, the 21st day"—it actually appeared on the 25th. Next came *The Biglow Papers*, with a title-page only less interesting, issued about the middle

of November; and finally, on December 18th, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*—to plague generations of schoolboys.

The Biglow Papers itself presents an interesting bibliographic puzzle, and one which may not yet have found a definitive solution. In the accepted first issue, the imprint on the title-page reads: "Cambridge: / Published by George Nichols. / 1848." In the accepted second issue, the imprint appears thus: "Cambridge: / Published by George Nichols. / New York: / George P. Putnam, 155 Broadway. / 1848."

The theory has been advanced by authorities who can hardly be ignored that Mr. Nichols, quite aware of the population distribution of the United States, would probably have given his earliest attention to the preparation of those copies designed for New York distribution, so that, presumably, copies with the live-line (Putnam) imprint were printed and bound earlier than those reserved for home consumption.

This is possible. Mr. Putnam had just published *A Fable for Critics*, so that Mr. Lowell was not unknown to him. But Mr. Lowell's name did not appear anywhere in *The Biglow Papers*, and *The Biglow Papers* were distinctly topical and localized. New York, city and State, might reasonably be expected to manifest little concern in a Massachusetts election, and Mr. Putnam might well not have been sufficiently interested in the possibilities of the book to be an eager purchaser of advance copies bearing his imprint. Some evidence of lukewarmness on Putnam's part is provided in a letter which Lowell's friend, Charles F. Briggs, addressed to Lowell under date of "Saturday Oct. 1848," which is quoted in the Chamberlain-Livingston bibliography of Lowell: "Putnam says that you may put his name into 100 copies for his London agency and 500 for New York, if you would like for him to attend to the sale and distribution here." The first printing was fifteen hundred copies, which would mean, if the directions given above were carried out, a residue of nine hundred copies with the Nichols imprint alone. On that basis, copies with the double imprint (Cambridge and New York) should today be about twice as scarce

as those with the Cambridge imprint alone. But whatever the reason, and whichever issue actually enjoys priority, copies with the Cambridge imprint alone are far scarcer than those with the double imprint—in the ratio, perhaps, of around one to four, to judge from auction records and catalogue entries.

Or this may have happened: George Nichols, as he would have been the first to admit, was not one of the great contemporary Boston publishers. He was, in fact, one of the proprietors of the University Press (Metcalf & Company) at Cambridge, and was destined to go down in history as perhaps the greatest of American proofreaders—which is the main reason, perhaps, why no textual error has ever been brought to light which might solve this vexed question of issues once and for all. His personal imprint was of little significance. Is it not possible that while *The Biglow Papers* was in press, Briggs's letter arrived with the glad tidings of Putnam's interest, that a new title-page was thereupon hastily improvised carrying the double imprint, and that copies of this new issue were distributed alike in New York and Boston, since the Putnam aegis (Putnam was then getting out a uniform edition of Irving) meant more to bookselling and book-buying Boston than that of George Nichols? The theory is plausible, and would account for the scarcity of copies with the three-line imprint.

The Biglow Papers, first series, did not appear in England until 1859, in which year two editions were marketed, one a piracy of John Camden Hotten, the other an authorized issue by Trübner & Co. which contained a preface by Thomas Hughes of *Tom Brown* fame.

But an attempt may have been made to secure an English publisher eleven years earlier, independent of the hundred copies set aside for Putnam's London agency. Richard Curle, in *Collecting American First Editions*, relates this experience: "England can still produce its American bargains. The other day I bought in a London bookshop an uncut copy in unlettered wrappers—the only copy in this precise state I have either seen or heard of—of Lowell's *Biglow Papers* (1848) for a sum

which might drive an envious man to despair. This copy, which contains several more blank leaves than do the copies in cloth, was presumably sent over there with the idea of finding a publisher or getting a review. It has now returned whence it came and its long oblivion is over."

§3. The second series of *The Biglow Papers* was inaugurated in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1862. Lowell meanwhile had passed considerable time abroad. His wife of nine years had died in 1853, and in 1855—the year in which he succeeded Longfellow as professor of modern languages and belles lettres at Harvard—he issued privately *The Poems of Maria Lowell* in an edition of fifty copies. Lowell had become editor of the *Atlantic* on its establishment in the fall of 1857, but had resigned early in 1861. The new series was presumably undertaken at the persuasive insistence of James T. Fields, Lowell's successor in the editorial chair. Of the eleven units, exclusive of the all-important introduction, which comprise the second series in book form, nine appeared in the *Atlantic* between 1862 and the spring of 1866. The book was issued in 1867 with the imprint of Ticknor and Fields, whose monogram was stamped on the backstrip—a consideration of some importance, since later issues have the Fields, Osgood monogram *with* the Ticknor and Fields title-page. Copies with the TF monogram, however, are themselves divisible into two issues, the weight of evidence favoring the priority of the copies on thinner paper than the others.

The second series, however, had in part enjoyed earlier publication in England—so much earlier that even the most determined scoffer at London imprints on American books can hardly ignore the situation. Trübner & Co. issued, in 1862, three pink-wrapped shilling pamphlets which contained two *Biglow Papers* each. Their fragile format has set them among the rarest of Lowell items. There were single-volume English editions in 1861 and 1865, of which the former, according to Mr. Curle, is found in two issues, one with imprints on pages 52 and 90 and one without.

Rare, too, for another reason, is the large-paper issue of the Boston edition of 1867. This issue consisted of twelve copies, and it is of some satisfaction to the collector to learn, in the Chamberlain-Livingston bibliography of Lowell, that these were probably printed at least two months after the small-paper copies. Nine of the twelve copies seem to have vanished; of the remaining three, one was the property of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and the other two, presentations to Longfellow and Charles Eliot Norton, are in the Harvard Library. Aldrich recorded that "the other ten copies" (he believed that the whereabouts of only two was known) "were stolen from an express cart on its way from the University Press to Lowell's house." It would seem safe, at this late day, for the thief to let one or two come into the market.

The first series of *The Biglow Papers* was introduced by twelve pages of "Notices of an Independent Press," a fact which causes an occasional cataloguer to describe a copy gravely as "with the press notices." These notices are, of course, not advertisements, but a component of the book, the work of Lowell himself, part and parcel of the comic scheme. The final notice is a quotation from the *Jalaam Independent Blunderbuss* which states that Mr. Biglow is "competent to the production of other kinds of poetry," and a sample is appended—six four-line stanzas of a fragment entitled "The Courtin'." Nineteen years later, when the second series was issued, "The Courtin'," now grown to the twenty-four four-line stanzas so familiar to-day, had the place of honor between the introduction and the first of the new papers. Which book, then, the first or second series, contains the first appearance of "The Courtin' "? The early fragment soon became famous—when the Duyckinck brothers' *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* appeared in 1855 it quoted six of Lowell's poems, including "The Courtin'."

History forgets itself. The slavery issue caused the bitterest and bloodiest war in American history and produced, as the sharpest satire directed at that issue, a book of which the most enduring element is a tender, Doric, romantic ballad.

Walden

IF YOU HAD GONE to Concord in quest of a sermon ready-written half a century after General Gage's redcoats had been pelted back to Boston you would probably have sought out Dr. Ezra Ripley, and if you had wanted to write a sermon for yourself, and were looking for a pencil to do it with, you would certainly have called on John Thoreau. Dr. Ripley had been ordained in Concord three years after the epochal skirmish; he preached his last sermon there in 1841, the day after his ninetieth birthday. His was a noble and enlightened character, with more than a trace of the picturesque, but his posthumous fame rests on his associations rather than on his utterances—he was the step-grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and a year after his death Nathaniel Hawthorne came to live in his house and to immortalize it as the Old Manse.

Shadows of the ancient occupant still lingered when Hawthorne moved in, and more than shadows. The doctor left a garretful of books behind him, weighty treatises that may have helped him climb "the steep ascent of Heaven" but that assuredly could never have got any closer to it themselves. "Dreary trash," Hawthorne called most of the clutter, which "would have been worth nothing at an auction"—unless Hawthorne had written a few marginal comments.

But the doctor was a humanitarian before he was a theologian. His famous step-grandson described him as "a natural gentleman; no dandy, but courtly, hospitable, public spirited." Three years before his death, on his eighty-seventh birthday, the doctor, on behalf of the pencil maker's younger son, had addressed the following document broadly "to the friends of

education": "The undersigned very cheerfully hereby introduces to public notice the bearer, Mr. David Henry Thoreau, as a teacher in the higher branches of useful literature. He is a native of this town, and a graduate of Harvard University. He is well disposed and well qualified to instruct the rising generation. His scholarship and moral character will bear the strictest scrutiny. He is modest and mild in his disposition and government, but not wanting in energy of character and fidelity in the duties of his profession. It is presumed his character and usefulness will be appreciated more highly as an acquaintance with him shall be cultivated. Cordial wishes for his success, reputation, and usefulness attend him, as an instructor and gentleman." The fine old doctor, who, by substituting "a native of Connecticut" for "a native of this town," might have used this testimonial as his own passport to the hereafter, was constrained to add a postscript: "N.B. It is but justice to observe here that the eyesight of the writer is much impaired." The deficiencies of Dr. Ripley's quavering penmanship were not to be held against young Mr. Thoreau.

But the doctor's kindness was unavailing. Thoreau (now David Henry, as Dr. Ripley noted, but soon to be Henry David by his own choice), fortified in addition with recommendations signed by Emerson and by Josiah Quincy, president of Harvard, traveled to Maine and came back equally disengaged. It was not his first journey out of Concord (he had once been to New York and would go again), nor was it to be his last (he went as far afield as Canada and Minnesota), but his whole life, these and a few other brief excursions apart, was in and of Concord—not a Concord of some two thousand souls situated fewer than twenty miles from Boston, but a Concord whose men and women were all humanity, whose borders the bounds of the universe. The most momentous pilgrimage of his short life—he died before his forty-fifth birthday—took him only a mile from his native village to the shores of Walden Pond, which became thereby the most famous body of water of its size in America.

Some seven years intervened between the failure of the Maine expedition and the beginning of the Walden hegira. Thoreau contrived to get one or two brief teaching positions; he learned and practiced surveying; he helped his father manufacture pencils; he wrote a little and lectured a little. At the end of August, 1839, he and his older brother John made a week's cruise in a home-made dory along the Concord and Merrimac rivers, the latter destined to become the busiest stream of its size in the New World, turning a million spindles. Less than three years later John was dead. Henry never set foot in the clumsy blue and green boat again.

The Walden occupancy began on July 4, 1845, when Thoreau was not quite twenty-eight years old. A legend not of Thoreau's making has grown up about the pondside sojourn. He was not the hermit absolute; his visits to home and village were frequent. His decision to live by himself was not a grand gesture of renunciation, an embittered turning of his back on mankind; he simply wanted "to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles." The Walden hut, then, was virtually only a workshop that happened to be farther removed from the main establishment than is the customary suburban "studio" affected today.

But in certain important details it was much more than that. Thoreau built the hut himself, and earned his livelihood there throughout his occupancy—earned it, too, by other means than writing, though writing was the "private business" that took him to Walden. The hut, by his own account, was "a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, eight-foot posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap-doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite." Mention must be made, too, of "a small woodshed adjoining, made chiefly of the stuff which was left after building the house." One might go farther than a mile from Concord and fare worse. Material and transportation cost a little more than twenty-eight dollars.

Thoreau subsequently detailed the low cost of living in

his Walden home with patent pride. The whole story is available in the book that takes its name from the pond. That book was in large part written here, but another preceded it which was also composed in good measure, but not entirely, in the Walden hut. The pair are all of Thoreau's books that were published in the course of his lifetime. Both were commercial failures. Never did an author die with less assurance of an enduring name.

§2. The first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, was published in 1849 at the author's expense by James Munroe and Company, of Boston. Thanks to Thoreau's meticulous care in keeping up his journals (which he began in youth and maintained faithfully to his death), the world has a singularly complete picture of the adventures of the *Week*. A thousand copies were printed, and not quite three hundred were sold or given away. The rest, four years later, were returned to the author, prompting the famous entry in the journal, "I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself." Soon after Thoreau's death these seven hundred volumes were reissued by Ticknor and Fields, who neglected to remove the advertisement leaf at the back which announced: "Will Soon Be Published. *Walden, or Life in The Woods*, By Henry D. Thoreau."

Walden appeared on August 9, 1854. It fared somewhat better than the *Week* had done, which is about all that can be said for it as an article of commerce. It was not reprinted until nine years later, from the same plates, with the subtitle, *Life in the Woods*, left out (perhaps so that readers would not think it was a hunting story), but with the vignette of the Walden hut still in place on the title-page. Thoreau's fellow townsman and first biographer, William Ellery Channing, the poet, who must not be confused with his more famous uncle of the same name, wrote under the drawing of the hut in his copy of *Walden*, "A feeble caricature of the true house." His quarrel, perhaps, was with the surroundings rather than with the house itself (it would be difficult to go wrong in sketching such a simple struc-

ture as Thoreau erected, the detailed specifications for which were available to the artist), for the foreground has the air of having been landscaped rather more elaborately than Thoreau's temperament would relish. Channing's opinion of the sketch may have been influenced by his aversion to the house of Ticknor and Fields. He would admit books with their imprint to his library, but he would gouge out the imprint first, leaving a great, jagged, vindictive hole in the title-page.

Walden received comparatively scant critical attention even for a day in which the number of mediums which had space for book notices was far smaller than it is now. Individual notices, however, were likely to be much longer; the commentator usually was allotted room enough not only to tell what he thought of a book, but also to summarize its contents in considerable detail and to present a sufficient number of extracts for the reader to form an independent impression. The review copy of *Walden* which Ticknor and Fields sent to *Putnam's Magazine* fortunately reached the hands of Charles F. Briggs, of the staff. Ten years earlier, Briggs had established the *Broadway Journal* and found desk room for Edgar Allan Poe, who supplied beautifully legible copy at a dollar a column. Briggs subsequently withdrew, and the sanguine Poe attempted to conduct the enterprise on his own, with the assistance of such casual capital as he could borrow from friends whose *savoir vivre* was too rudimentary for them to know how to deny him. But his ambition outstripped accounts receivable, and the *Broadway Journal* vanished into that crowded limbo where starved periodicals bewail their association with proprietors who are long on ideas and short on the managerial flair.

Briggs devoted five of the meaty two-columned pages of the October issue of *Putnam's* to *Walden* under the happy and durable title of "A Yankee Diogenes": "The New England character is essentially anti-Diogenic; the Yankee is too shrewd not to comprehend the advantages of living in what we call the world; there are no bargains to be made in the desert, nobody to be taken advantage of in the woods, while the dwellers in

tubs and shanties have slender opportunities of bettering their condition by barter. When the New Englander leaves his home, it is not for the pleasure of living by himself; if he is migratory in his habits, it is not from his fondness for solitude, nor from any impatience he feels at living in a crowd. Where there are most men, there is, generally, most money, and there is where the strongest attractions exist for the genuine New Englander. A Yankee Diogenes is a *lusus*, and we feel a peculiar interest in reading the account which an oddity of that kind gives of himself. The name of Thoreau has not a New England sound; but we believe that the author of *Walden* is a genuine New Englander, and of New England antecedents and education. Although he plainly gives the reasons for publishing his book, at the outset, he does not clearly state the causes that led him to live the life of a hermit on the shore of Walden Pond. But we infer from his volume that his aim was the very remarkable one of trying to be something, while he lived upon nothing; in opposition to the general rule of striving to live upon something, while doing nothing."

Following the insertion of a mass of well-selected quotation, Briggs concluded: "There is much excellent good sense delivered in a very comprehensive and by no means unpleasant style in Mr. Thoreau's book, and let people think as they may of the wisdom or propriety of living after his fashion, denying oneself all the luxuries which the earth can afford, for the sake of leading a life of lawless vagabondage, and freedom from starched collars, there are but few readers who will fail to find profit and refreshment in his pages. Perhaps some practical people will think that a philosopher like Mr. Thoreau might have done the world a better service by purchasing a piece of land, and showing how much it might be made to produce, instead of squatting on another man's premises, and proving how little will suffice to keep body and soul together. But we must allow philosophers, and all other men, to fulfil their missions in their own way. If Mr. Thoreau had been a practical farmer, we should not have been favored with his volumes; his corn

and cabbage would have done but little towards profiting us, and we might never have been the better for his labors. As it is, we see how much more valuable to mankind is our philosophical vagabond than a hundred sturdy agriculturists; any plodder may raise beans, but it is only one in a million who can write a readable volume."

§3. Two years later, in the *Westminster Review* for January, 1856, was published another significant notice of *Walden*—significant not so much for what it said as for who said it. It was unsigned, but the writer's signature at the moment would have carried little weight, for not until later in this same year did she make her first essay in the field in which her successes would set her on a pinnacle of greatness among the Victorians. Her name was Marian Evans, and she has come down to fame as George Eliot.

Her notice of *Walden* is quoted in Francis H. Allen's bibliography of Thoreau (Boston, 1908). She found the book "a bit of pure American life (not the 'go-ahead' species, but its opposite pole), animated by that energetic, yet calm spirit of innovation, that practical as well as theoretic independence of formulae, which is peculiar to some of the finer American minds. . . . His observations of natural phenomena . . . are not only made by a keen eye, but have their interest enhanced by passing through the medium of a deep poetic sensibility; and, indeed, we feel throughout the book the presence of a refined as well as a hardy mind."

Thoreau the observer of natural phenomena—a kind of concentrated John Burroughs, a nondynamic Roosevelt, an Audubon who did not paint—is the Thoreau of popular conception to this day. The picture has two sides, and limners of each may be cited as proof not of their respective views, but of the fact that selected evidence can be accurate and yet prove anything. Said Robert Louis Stevenson, in an essay that roused the ire of William Henry Hudson—Stevenson, who died at the same age as Thoreau and of the same ailment:

"He could guide himself about the woods on the darkest

night by the touch of his feet. He could pick up at once an exact dozen of pencils by the feeling, pace distances with accuracy, and gauge cubic contents by the eye. His smell was so dainty that he could perceive the foetor of dwelling-houses as he passed them by at night; his palate so unsophisticated that, like a child, he disliked the taste of wine—or perhaps, living in America, had never tasted any that was good; and his knowledge of nature was so complete and curious that he could have told the time of year, within a day or so, by the aspect of the plants. In his dealings with animals, he was the original of Hawthorne's Donatello. He pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, the hunted fox came to him for protection; wild squirrels have been seen to nestle in his waistcoat; he would thrust his arm into a pool and bring forth a bright, panting fish lying undismayed in the palm of his hand."

And thus James Russell Lowell: "It is curious, considering what Thoreau afterwards became, that he was not by nature an observer. He only saw the things he looked for, and was less poet than naturalist. Till he built his Walden shanty, he did not know that the hickory grew in Concord. Till he went to Maine, he had never seen phosphorescent wood, a phenomenon familiar to most country boys. At forty he speaks of the seeding of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold-dust of blowing pollen might have earlier drawn his eye. Neither his attention nor his genius was of the spontaneous kind. He discovered nothing. He thought everything a discovery of his own, from moonlight to the planting of acorns and nuts by squirrels."

§4. There are, happily, no puzzling bibliographic points about the first edition of *Walden*, except one that is no point at all. *Walden* is one of those troublesome books which contain dated advertisements bound separately at the end, and many well-meaning people assume that these advertisements (or rather the dates on them) possess surpassing importance. For the benefit of those who will find comfort in the thought, it may be said that the earliest dated advertisements are for April,

1854, and the latest, apparently, for October of the same year. The book was published, as has been said, in August, so owners of copies with advertisements dated April are privileged to derive any satisfaction they care to from the fact, disregarding the inescapable possibility that copies with advertisements dated August may well have been the first to leave the publisher's hands. The New York Public Library copy was owned by Evert A. Duyckinck and bears his inscription and the date "Aug. 1854." It was acquired, in other words, no later than twenty-two days after publication—and the advertisements are dated May, 1854.

After Thoreau's death his manuscripts—a formidable bulk of them—passed to his sister Sophia, whose own death in 1881 removed the name of Thoreau from American annals. The manuscript journals then became the property of Harrison Blake, of Worcester, Massachusetts, who edited them for publication, and Blake subsequently disposed of them to Stephen H. Wakeman, of New York. From his hands they passed to the Morgan Library many years before the dispersal, in 1924, of the great Wakeman collection of books of the great New Englanders following Mr. Wakeman's death. Only the absence of his magnificent manuscript material prevented the Wakeman sale from being one of the supreme moments in the history of literary auctions—the event was notable as it was, but the American bookman will always regret the fact that books and manuscripts could not have been dispersed together.

The manuscript of *Walden*, however, never formed a unit in the Wakeman collection. It came into the possession of W. K. Bixby, who permitted its publication in 1909 by the Bibliophile Society of Boston, with an introduction by Thoreau's old friend, Frank B. Sanborn of Concord. Examination of the manuscript disclosed the fact that some twelve thousand words of it had never seen print. In his introduction to the Bibliophile Society edition Mr. Sanborn surmised that the original publishers wanted to shorten the work and so held out material which would have swelled the first edition to about four

hundred pages. Francis H. Allen, however, believes it is equally possible that Thoreau himself did the cutting.

Walden made its first appearance in England in 1884—George Eliot, therefore, obviously read a copy of the genuine first edition, an item which would make a pleasant association book—but these were the American sheets with a London and Edinburgh title-page. The first native English edition was published in 1886 in the Camelot Classics, with a finely sympathetic introduction by Will H. Dircks. The book has twice been translated into German, and, as recently as 1922, has become available in a French translation. The light from the hut on the shores of Walden Pond will yet shine round the world.

The Song of Hiawatha

THE PROCESS of resigning from the faculty of Harvard College in 1854 necessitated an impressive bulk of correspondence. President, corporation, fellows—all seem to have required at least one letter apiece; some of them, whether they required it or not, received two. But the Smith Professor of French and Spanish and Professor of Belles-Lettres (who were one person named Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) was equal to the occasion. His official communications on the matter of his departure were formal but gracious; he had filled his chair for eighteen admittedly congenial years; his professorial connection with the college had been to him a source of “much pleasure and advantage.”

Why, then, resign? The explanation is set forth nowhere in this budget of formal correspondence; it is touched on in a postscript to a letter to President James Walker: “I have not assigned any reasons for my resignation, thinking it better to avoid a repetition of details, which I have already explained to you.” The details were set forth, however, if not for the archives of Harvard College, in a letter to the German poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, long an intimate friend and correspondent: “I want to try the effect of change on my mind, and of freedom from routine. Household occupations, children, relatives, friends, strangers, and college lectures so completely fill up my days that I have no time for poetry; and, consequently, the last two years have been very unproductive with me. I am not, however, very sure or sanguine about the results.”

The sextette of time consumers which Professor Longfellow listed may well have been enumerated in climactic order. The

main burden of household cares must have rested on the competent shoulders of his second wife—the first had died in Rotterdam nearly twenty years before. The children were five—two sons and three daughters, the oldest ten years old—, but Craigie House was amply dimensioned, and doubtless offered room enough for their activities and still permitted quiet in the parental study. Relatives could hardly have been so numerous as friends, nor friends as strangers, who must have been particularly annoying, though the recipient of their attentions was too kindly to betray his annoyance. Among these, even now, was the autograph stalker, whose persistence dogged Longfellow to the end of his days.

For Professor Longfellow was already a person of note outside the academic purlieu of Cambridge. Many books carried his name on their title-pages, and his bibliography was as varied as it was extensive. Textbooks, translations, travel sketches, romances, poems long and short—all attested to his unremitting industry. Of the shorter poems, those by which his memory best endures today were already written: "A Psalm of Life," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Village Blacksmith," "Excelsior," "The Building of the Ship." The longest of his published poems, "Evangeline," had been the direct suggestion of his Bowdoin classmate, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Following his graduation Longfellow had spent some time in Europe preparatory to assuming the newly established chair of modern languages at his alma mater in 1829. He remained at Bowdoin until 1835, when he was called to Harvard, but first he passed another year abroad, taking up his residence in Cambridge, a widower of a twelvemonth, at the end of 1836.

By 1854 he had spent thirty-two of his forty-seven years under the direct stimulus of the academic atmosphere, and in stimulating that atmosphere himself. In the decades since Longfellow's death the teacher has become submerged in the poet. But no man can serve a generation of students (or a single casual class, for that matter) without leaving an impress on them for good or ill. It was Longfellow's service to bring the

humanities to pre-bellum New England—to act as interpreter and expositor of a living European culture which was not wholly honored in its own countries. He acquired an intellectual background of surpassing range and breadth; he was steeped in the lore of most of civilization; he was a spiritual citizen of the world to a degree that few men of his day, regardless of location, could boast.

It was, perhaps, this very cosmopolitanism that made him the more keenly appreciative of the fact that the North American continent was not wholly destitute of traditions. In Craigie House itself lingered the powerful Washington tradition—the mansion had been the General's headquarters during the siege of Boston. Longfellow had come there as a lodger in 1837, and had been assigned the General's own room. But behind Washington stretched an undatable path of native traditions—the American Indian and his romantic story. To the pioneer of the eastern seaboard the Indian had been a little too real to appear romantic, just as he would remain to various groups of Westerners until into the 1890's. James Fenimore Cooper had discovered and idealized him, sending the pendulum crashing to its farthest swing away from realism. Back in his Bowdoin days Longfellow and a fellow student had acted a debate on the Indian problem, the classmate posing as the usurping foreigner and Longfellow as the outraged native, concluding his plea in these words:

"Alas! the sky is overcast with dark and blustering clouds. The rivers run with blood, but never, never will we suffer the grass to grow upon our war-path. And now I do remember that the Initiate prophet, in my earlier years, told from his dreams that all our race should fall like withered leaves when autumn strips the forest! Lo! I hear sighing and sobbing: 'tis the death-song of a mighty nation, the last requiem over the grave of the fallen."

§2. It was on April 19, 1854—the anniversary of Lexington and Concord—that Longfellow gave his last Harvard lecture,—“the last I shall ever deliver, here or anywhere.” On June 5 he

wrote in his journal: "I am reading with great delight the Finnish epic, Kalevala. It is charming." On June 22 appeared this entry: "I have at length hit upon a plan for a poem on the American Indians, which seems to me the right one, and the only. It is to weave together their beautiful traditions into a whole. I have hit upon a measure, too, which I think the right and only one for such a theme."

Three days later—June 25—composition actually began. Longfellow referred to the projected work as "Manabozho, or whatever it is to be called." On June 26 he began to digest Schoolcraft's compendious treatise on the Indians, hampered (as Mr. Mencken so often is) by the lack of an index. On June 27 he was busily engaged with the new poem when he was interrupted by "Mr. Wales, who called with two Cubans,—pleasant young men." Only Longfellow could graciously have put aside an engrossing task to converse with a pair of casual strangers of any nationality and still find them pleasant. On the following day he began to lean strongly to the title which he ultimately chose: "Worked at Manabozho, or, as I think I shall call it, Hiawatha—that being another name for the same personage."

So the work progressed. On June 4, 1855, not quite a year after initiation of the task, this entry appeared in the journal: "Proof-sheets of Hiawatha." At the very moment, perhaps, Walt Whitman was similarly engaged, at a bench in the Rome Brothers' printshop in Brooklyn, on *Leaves of Grass*.

The book was published on November 10. "Hiawatha published today," said the journal, "by Ticknor and Fields, who tell me that more than four thousand out of five of the edition are sold. They ordered a new edition of three thousand." November 15: "Hiawatha makes some sensation"—"some" almost in its contemporary colloquial sense. "Sundry squibs and the like, imitations of the meter, as if it stirred the minds of readers a little." By the middle of December Ticknor and Fields were going to press with the eleventh thousand.

So far so good—never better, in fact, for a long poem by an American poet. But all America was not yet ready for an all-

American poem. Voices were raised in strident protest. Only ten days after the publication of *The Song of Hiawatha* the Boston *Daily Traveler* took up the cudgels in opposition, a whole armful of them, in this wise:

"We cannot deny that the spirit of poesy breathes throughout the work . . . but we cannot but express our regret that our own pet national poet should not have selected as the theme of his muse something higher and better than the silly legends of the savage aborigines. His poem does not awaken one sympathetic throb; it does not teach a single truth; and, rendered into prose, Hiawatha would be a mass of the most childish nonsense that ever dropped from human pen. In verse it contains nothing so precious as the golden time which would be lost in the reading of it."

Ticknor and Fields thereupon committed a tactical error. They withdrew their advertising from the *Traveler*. This gave the *Traveler* an opportunity that it could hardly neglect. The Ticknor and Fields letter was printed verbatim, followed by the charge that the house was trying to "influence the press." The incident added richly combustible fuel to a fire that was already raging widely in the nation's newspapers. Not all commentators, of course, were in opposition. Important men like Emerson liked the poem; so did Hawthorne; so did Bayard Taylor.

And there were parodies. *Hiawatha*, declared Henry F. Legler in an interesting bibliographical account of the book in the *Literary Collector* (November-December, 1904), "remains to this day the most parodied poem in the English language. Not less than seven parodies nearly, if not quite, as long as the original poem, have been printed in separate book form. The parodies in fugitive form number considerably in excess of one thousand." For the production of these the facile swing of the meter of the Finnish epic was, as Longfellow noted, mainly responsible. Blank verse in English had been written before, but it was almost an unwritten law that blank verse must be in iambic pentameter. Here was a radical (even though he had

precedent) who dared attempt it in trochaic tetrameter. Fortunate for Longfellow that his reputation as a practiced poet was already soundly established.

It was established, in fact, as soundly in England as it was at home. *Hiawatha* was issued in London with the imprint of David Bogue, and it is somewhat disconcerting to note that while presumably every copy of the first American edition contains bound-in advertisements dated November, 1855, presumably every known copy of the first English edition contains bound-in advertisements dated March, 1855.

A few months before Longfellow's death Anthony Trollope contributed to the *North American Review* (April, 1881) a study of Longfellow in which, after expressing his opinion that *Hiawatha* was the American poet's "greatest work," he gave his recollections of its introduction to his own countrymen: "I remember when, on its first appearance in London, it became almost an object of ridicule because of the singularity of the meter, and the continued reiteration of sounds and translations which the poet has allowed himself to adopt." A parody in *Punch*, Trollope asserted, "for a time was better known in London than 'Hiawatha' itself." The *Examiner* conservatively declared that "Mr. Longfellow's reputation will, we think, be raised by the *Song of Hiawatha*; . . . though we do not expect it to be immediately popular"; it conceded, however, that he had "done his best to accomplish for the Indian border-land of America what years ago Walter Scott did for our Scottish border-land." But the *Athenaeum* enthusiastically announced: "At length we have an American song by an American singer." And *Chambers's Journal* declared: "We take Longfellow to be the most popular poet living. We believe his poems sell more, and are read more, than any other."

It added a comment that will find a multitude of echoes today: "His poetry is just the perfection of the happy medium: he has hit the golden mean. He has not creative power, nor a large shaping imagination; he does not exhibit much force of passion, and seldom reaches the sublime; but he has so much

quiet beauty and tenderness, and is so peculiarly felicitous in appealing to the moral nature through the imagination, that the heart warmly welcomes him as a pleasant and genial guest. He is unequalled in setting to noble music some brave sentiment that runs through the soul of universal humanity; and this is one great cause of the wide human sympathy which greets his poems. He has no very fine frenzies, treads no perilous heights, sounds no dim unfathomed depths; but he goes on the even tenor of his way, with delightful ease and quiet sense of sufficient power to bear the burden of his song."

The *Examiner* was far too cautious. In America alone fifty thousand copies of *Hiawatha* were sold within two years. There were songs in which Hiawatha and Minnehaha were hero and heroine; the most popular among them did not appear until the present century, by which time *The Song of Hiawatha* had become as firmly established as *Paradise Lost*. There was a whole series of "Hiawatha" Currier and Ives prints—a phenomenon which would never have come to pass unless that astute house, with one sensitive finger ever on the public pulse, had seen an assured market.

§3. In outer dress *The Song of Hiawatha* was as conservative a product as any issued by Ticknor and Fields—and no house ever put less faith in the structural frivolities of a book. Five years earlier they had indulged in a mild typographic spree in permitting the use of red ink on the title-page of *The Scarlet Letter*; in the year preceding *Hiawatha* they had gone to the length of using a vignette of Thoreau's cabin on the title-page of *Walden*. *Hiawatha* stopped well short of these kittenish excesses—of any excesses at all. Save for the blind filagree on the front and back covers—certainly the most famous stock decoration in American publishing history—the book was utterly barren of esthetic pretensions.

But it sheltered a bibliographical jewel in its heart for all that—at least the early copies did. In line 7, page 96, it was originally chronicled that Kwasind

Dove as if he were a beaver.

Somewhere in the process of printing the five thousand copies that constituted the first edition "dove" yielded to "dived." At what stage the alteration occurred no one knows—not until a fair proportion of the run was completed, certainly, for not even the most enthusiastic cataloguer would today call the first issue excessively rare. But the story behind the change seems past finding out. The most comprehensive reference to it appears to be a short discussion of the puzzle by Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury:

"How this offending preterite passed the proof-reader without protest is one of those mysteries which have never been revealed. But the form certainly made its appearance, and can still be found in copies of the poem which were regularly published and sold. Boston never received such a shock since the days when Fenimore Cooper insisted that it was in the Middle States that the English language was spoken in its purity. But that attack came from an outsider. Here the offender was of her own household—was, in fact, her favorite son. What means of suppression was resorted to will probably never be disclosed. A mysterious reticence has always been preserved in regard to this linguistic escapade; the biographies of Longfellow appear to be silent upon the subject. Measures of some sort must, however, have been taken at once. 'Dove' was expunged, and the decorous 'dived' assumed its place; and the whole transaction was so completely hushed up that no public scandal was created. Let him who possesses a copy of that first impression continue to cherish it. Whatever may be its worth now, the time will come when it will reach the value of the virtuous woman of Scripture, and its price will be far above rubies."

The use of the delectable term "suppression" here is somewhat misleading. The only suppression resorted to was the casting out of the "offending preterite." It is improbable that the publishers destroyed any of the "dove" sheets, though that act, particularly if they had taken the trouble to leave behind documentary evidence of it, would have been appreciated by the book collector of today.

The dove-dived shift is not, however, the sole distinguishing mark between the first and the second issue of *The Song of Hiawatha*. Richard Curle, in *Collecting American First Editions*, lists several others which have not been nearly so well press-agented but which are bibliographically as significant. The Indian cry of lamentation is uniformly altered in the second issue from "Wahonomin" to "Wahonowin." "Line 11 of page 32," Mr. Curle continues, "in the first form reads 'In the Moon when nights are brightest,' and in the second form, 'To the melancholy north-land'; and at line 17 of page 278 the line 'Cooed the Omemee, the pigeon' becomes 'Cooed the pigeon, the Omeme'—this misprint being corrected to 'Omenice' by 1856. . . . The third state differs from the second only in that at line 9 of page 27 the 'cormorant and heron' become 'cormorant and curlew'. Whether or not there is any fourth state, and if so what differences it contains, is as yet unknown." Mr. Curle adds that "'dove' is apparently always an accurate enough catch-word." Kwasind's plunge, therefore, can safely remain the best-known leap in American history, even exceeding in popularity, among bookmen at any rate, Steve Brodie's historic descent from Brooklyn Bridge.

The question of the correct pronunciation of "Hiawatha" was raised as soon as the book appeared, and has never been definitely settled. There was even a division of opinion in the poet's own household—not, however, one of serious proportions, since the humor implicit in the puzzle was properly evaluated. *High* as against *he* has certainly established a premiership of popularity among the generations of admirers who have flourished since 1855.

The Autocrat

WHEN THE BRIG *Mermaid* reached Boston toward the end of May, 1833, on her return from a brief voyage to the Levant, she bore the body of Edwin Buckingham, who had died five days earlier. Had he lived another month he would have been twenty-three years old. The effect of Buckingham's premature passing on the course of American literature can be measured only when humanity is endowed with an infallible gauge for the reckoning of the might-have-been. Buckingham, the younger son of Joseph Tinker Buckingham, proprietor of the *Boston Courier*, had undertaken the journey to the Mediterranean in a last futile attempt to escape the ravages of tuberculosis. He and his father had formed an effective editorial team that might have heralded a notable journalistic dynasty. The father's career had been sufficiently romantic to merit more attention than it has received, even if the romantic element were its sole claim to notice. Born in Connecticut in 1779, the son of Nehemiah Tinker, he had successfully petitioned the Massachusetts legislature in 1804 to permit him to take the surname of Buckingham—that of his maternal grandmother. The reasons for this powerful inclination toward the distaff side seem never to have been disclosed. Nehemiah Tinker died when his son Joseph was three years old, leaving an estate comprising a widow and ten children. Joseph, bound out to a farmer, served his time and then, reasonably, would have no more of farming. He learned printing, joined a theatrical troupe, taught school, and by 1806 was conducting the *Polyanthos* of Boston—a periodical which merits at least footnote immortality by reason of certain animadversions on the

histrionic prowess of Elizabeth Poe which sent her husband David bounding into the editor's office in response to the time-honored urge to pulp its occupant.

By the time he was eighteen Edwin Buckingham was proving an effective follower in his father's busy and competent footsteps. In 1831 they established the *New England Magazine*—a venture for which the father, in his memoirs, gives the son entire credit. The new publication was Edwin's "offspring and property"; it was inaugurated to endure for at least one tentative year, so that no innocent subscriber might be defrauded of his due; it continued as a Buckingham enterprise until the end of 1834, eighteen months after the son's death, when the heartsick father permitted it to pass into other hands.

Young Buckingham had the editorial flair, as an inspection of the issues of the *New England Magazine* published under his supervision shows. The contributors, though almost uniformly anonymous, or identified only by their initials, were men of moment, or at least men who would one day have their moment—perhaps an enduring one. The elder Buckingham, when he published his memoirs in 1852, declared: "There may be no impropriety now in revealing the names of the writers," and then specified the titles and authorship of contributions by the Reverend N. L. Frothingham, Edward Everett, Judge Story, William Austin, George S. Hillard, Professor Longfellow, Samuel Kettle, the Reverend Leonard Withington, and Timothy Walker. Then, in fairness, Buckingham states that there were many other "contributions, too numerous to be particularized, by sundry lesser contemporaries, among them Oliver W. Holmes" and others. The oddity of the thing is that Oliver Wendell Holmes would one day share an identical opinion regarding the value of his own contributions to the *New England Magazine*.

§2. Edwin Buckingham's selection of this modest contributor to the *New England* is the most assured surviving proof of his editorial genius. At the moment of his selection for the honor its recipient had not yet inserted in the new *Daily Eve-*

ning *Transcript* the intelligence that "Dr. O. W. Holmes has taken an office at No. 34 Tremont Row." Born in Cambridge in 1809, and thus Edwin Buckingham's senior by not quite a year, Holmes had attended Phillips Andover and Harvard and then spent a year studying law. At the end of 1830 he gave up law in favor of medicine for the best of all possible reasons: "I did not like the one, and I do like the other."

Despite his youth and the exacting demands of the classroom, Holmes had unwittingly contrived in a single effort a literary reputation that would probably have survived had he never written another line except on a prescription pad. In the summer of 1830 the Navy Department had ordered the scraping of the *Constitution*, then lying at Charlestown, on the grounds that she was unseaworthy, despite the fact that her unseaworthiness was a natural consequence of the scars suffered in her gallant harrying of the pride of the British fleet in the War of 1812. The *Constitution* was not an old ship—only twelve years older than Oliver Wendell Holmes, who sprang to her defense with inspired zeal. "Old Ironsides" was composed at white heat and dispatched to the Boston *Daily Advertiser*, which printed the superb challenge to American patriotism in its issue of September 16, 1830. The lines were copied by newspapers throughout the country, and in Washington, at least, scattered abroad on handbills—a form in which they seem to have eluded collectors. The soul of the nation was stirred, and a chorus of popular indignation dinned into the ears of Secretary John Branch, who rescinded the condemnation order. Few other poets have attained nation-wide fame and their majorities within less than a month of each other, and no other poet has ever made a Secretary of the Navy back water.

It was, in all likelihood, the fame of "Old Ironsides" that led Buckingham, in his search for talent, to enlist the support of Holmes. It is a connection which one would know more about but probably never will. At all events, when the first number of the *New England Magazine* appeared, dated October, 1831, it contained a prose contribution called "A Week of Frailty"

and signed O.W.H., which, with the exception of one of two untitled poems sandwiched into it, has never appeared in a collected edition of Holmes's works. The following month's issue contained another contribution signed O.W.H. and called "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." In the issue for February, 1832, appeared "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. Part II;"—unsigned. The earlier installment had contained no indication of a second part to follow, the later was similarly sufficient unto itself. Together, the two papers comprised perhaps five thousand words—rather fewer than make up an average *Saturday Evening Post* short story today. Holmes contributed sundry other odds and ends to succeeding numbers, but the "Autocrat" vein was never reopened during the life of Buckingham's *New England Magazine*. Buckingham departed on the fruitless quest for health, and Holmes returned to dissecting room and laboratory.

§3. A quarter-century passes. Dr. Holmes is getting on toward fifty; he is married and the father of two sons and a daughter, of whom the daughter and the younger son are not fated to survive him, and the older son is to suffer honorable wounds in a swiftly approaching war, and to become a great jurist in whom length of days will not produce sclerosis of ideas. Let a wise and witty biographer—his nephew, John T. Morse, Jr.—picture the semicentenarian as he stood on the threshold of great affairs:

"His name had scarcely been heard outside of the small town of Boston. There his friends knew him only as a clever man, and a medical professor who lectured creditably, a poet whose lines were good enough to have been once or twice gathered into a volume, a shrewd humorist, a merry wit, delightful in the chance encounter, not to be surpassed at the dinner-table, and of much usefulness upon so-called 'occasions.' It was a sufficiently pleasant and satisfactory life, from day to day and year to year, if one had no special ambition; and, for this matter, nothing indicates that Dr. Holmes had been disturbed in his contentment by any notion that he had in him unexploited

value. Yet the discovery was about to be made, as unexpectedly to himself and others as when the ordinary pasture is suddenly discovered to be pregnant with gold!"

The discovery was a direct result of the establishment of another new magazine—Dr. Holmes was as much in demand at intellectual as at physical parturitions. Phillips, Sampson & Co. were the proprietors of the latest venture and James Russell Lowell was the editor. Lowell, ten years younger than Holmes, had won fame at twenty-seven when the first of *The Biglow Papers* had appeared in Joseph Tinker Buckingham's *Boston Courier*. Lowell would accept the editorial chair, he had written Holmes, if the latter would be "the first contributor to be engaged." And beyond peradventure Holmes was the first contributor—he gave the new magazine its name: *The Atlantic Monthly*. He described the connection at a breakfast tendered him by the *Atlantic's* publishers (then H. O. Houghton & Co.) in 1879 in honor of his seventieth birthday:

"Mr. Lowell had a fancy that I could be useful as a contributor, and woke me from a kind of literary lethargy in which I was half slumbering, to call me to active service. Remembering some crude contributions of mine to an old magazine, it occurred to me that their title might serve for some fresh papers, and so I sat down and wrote off what came into my head under the title, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. This series of papers was not the result of an express premeditation, but was, as I may say, dipped from the running stream of my thoughts. Its very kind reception encouraged me, and you know the consequences, which have lasted from that day to this."

The resurrected "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" (this time, be it noted, with a hyphen) began its career in the first (November, 1857) number of the *Atlantic* and ran for twelve issues. "I was just going to say, when I was interrupted," it began, the interruption referring, of course, to the termination of the *New England Magazine* contributions in 1832. When, late in 1858, *The Autocrat* appeared in book form, the four-

page preface entitled "The Autocrat's Autobiography" told the story of the earlier essays and quoted three paragraphs from which the author trusted might "perhaps bear reproducing," though for the rest he hoped that the original papers might not "be reprinted anywhere"—a wish that has been disregarded, apparently, only in a single periodical resurrection early in the present century.

Contributors to the early numbers of the *Atlantic* were not identified, but the company included Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Mrs. Stowe, Motley, Trowbridge, Norton, Parke Godwin, and, of course, Lowell himself, with the addition of a few transoceanic representatives who had been effectively solicited by Francis H. Underwood, an intimate of most of the native contributors and the periodical's first overseas scout. The initial installment of a serial by Mrs. Stowe was to have appeared in the first number; she was represented instead by a short story, "The Mourning Veil." The first *Atlantic* novel, therefore (it began in this same first number), was "Akin by Marriage," of which two chapters were offered. Chapter III appeared in December, Chapter IV in January, but readers looked in vain for the February installment; if they were persevering they found this note at the end of the "Literary Notices": "The continuation of the story, 'Akin by Marriage,' is unavoidably deferred, owing to the severe illness of the author. It will be resumed as soon as his health will permit." It was never resumed. The issue for September announced the death of Calvin W. Philleo, author of "Akin by Marriage," who thus tragically achieved the distinction of being the first *Atlantic* contributor to be identified in its pages.

But, to admit a technicality, Oliver Wendell Holmes himself was actually the first *Atlantic* contributor to be identified in the periodical. The department called "The Round Table," conducted by Lowell himself, quoted seven four-line stanzas which, the preceding August, had been "addressed by Holmes to the historian of William the Silent"—that is, John Lothrop Motley. The stanzas were collected in *Songs in Many Keys*

(1862) as "A Parting Health to J. L. Motley. On His Return to England After the Publication of the Rise of the Dutch Republic;" but they were also included (pages 28 and 29) in the first edition of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. It is probable that Editor Lowell held them out of the first installment for mechanical reasons and included them in "The Round Table" as a pleasant gesture of justice.

The most widely read piece of native humor at the moment the *Atlantic* was launched was *The Sparrowgrass Papers*, which, following serialization in *Putnam's Magazine*, had appeared in book form in 1856 and had won an instant success. Their author, Frederick S. Cozzens, was a leading New York wine merchant and is credited, among other innovations, with the introduction to the seaboard of "the native Longworth wines of Ohio." Praise from Cozzens was approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley indeed, and when he wrote Holmes soon after the appearance of the first *Atlantic*, the flattered author responded with warm gratitude:

Boston Dec. 2d 1857.

My dear Mr Cozzens,

I have just received your very kind note and am only too sorry that I cannot accept your offered hospitality. I have felt obliged to give up my Yonkers engagement and made my excuses to Mr. Putnam.

—Do let me thank you for your more than kind notice of "a friend of mine" (as Miss Cripps says in Little Pedlington) *The Autocrat* etc. You were not so far wrong in saying that some of the notions had been ripening for a while in my friend's mind before he printed them.

If I remember right he begins "I was just going to say, when I was interrupted"—

By Jove, Sir, when do you think he was "interrupted?" More than a quarter of a century ago, Sir, in the year of grace 1831 [1832], when he, the Autocrat, was talking at his Breakfast Table in the "New England Magazine", edited by Joseph T. Buckingham, now toddling about in senility, toothless and taciturn! Louis Philippe was sporting his "rissad" in those days, and General Jackson was on the throne—and the grandmother grapes of your "ripe old Madeira" were standing at the end of a long queue of embryo candidates for vegetable life, waiting to be born.—Eheu!

Nothing does one so much good as a little hearty praise; a man can bear a great deal of it, and it is a great deal better for not keeping it until it cools down. My friend, the Autocrat has that weakness, if it be one, of "approbativeness" I think the phrenologists call it and your kind words tickled his heart's root, as Chaucer has it.

—And so with many thanks and regrets that I am tied down—
I am

Yours most truly
O. W. HOLMES.

PS. The "Boston Ocean" joke, in a little different form is at the printer's and has been there a week—What did you head it off for? I tell "my friend" to let it stand.—

§4. Phillips, Sampson & Co, in issuing *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* in book form, produced that which, while it will indubitably be a joy forever, was hardly a thing of beauty. But they put themselves to considerable expense in the process, and their well-intentioned endeavors on behalf of *The Autocrat* may have been a minor item (the panic of 1857 was the major cause) in hastening the financial disaster that soon overwhelmed them. The book was illustrated, and by Augustus Hoppin, the foremost humorous artist of his day Hoppin, like Holmes, had studied law and then abandoned it for a calling nearer to the heart's desire. He had won fame the preceding year by his embellishments of William Allen Butler's *Nothing to Wear*. His *Autocrat* drawings included an engraved title-page which is the least successful of them all (despite an effective silhouette of the Autocrat himself in the background), and which, for that reason perhaps, was soon abandoned. Late in 1858 (and late enough in that year to be dated 1859) a large-paper issue was printed from the same plates. The theory used once to be advanced that the large-paper issue, despite the later date (in itself no proof of later publication), might have preceded the small-paper issue, but this view is clearly set at naught by an advertisement of *The Autocrat* in the *Atlantic* for December, 1858 (reproduced in Richard Curle's *Collecting American First Editions*), which announces, "The first edition of ten thousand copies already sold!" and adds, to attract notice



THE INGRAVED TITLE PAGE OF THE "STOCK II"

From the drawing by Augustus Hoppin. Note the shelf we pulled out the author behind the breakfast table.

at the Christmas season, "In Press: A fine edition of the 'Autocrat' on tinted paper, in bevelled boards, gilt"

The first issue of the small-paper edition of *The Autocrat* (the first issue of the first edition, that is), to summarize the data presented in Mr. Curle's manual, is identifiable by these points: Front and back end papers and paste-downs contain advertisements, the heading on the third end paper (facing inside back cover) reading "Poetry and the Drama" and that on the inside back cover "School Books" (not "Miscellaneous"); there must be *no* leaf of advertisements following the index (pages 375-76); an engraved title-page must precede the printed one. The first issue of the large-paper edition must have "Boston," not "Ticknor and Co.," at the bottom of the backstrip, the latter binding obviously following the decease of Phillips, Sampson & Co. Copies of the small-paper edition in the very earliest state may show five ornamental circles on the backstrip, one above the title and four below, like buttons on a uniform, but as only three or four such copies appear to be known, it seems safe to assume that booksellers and collectors alike, for their peace of mind, will regard these as exemplars of a pre-first or trial issue.

The immediate popularity of *The Autocrat* is amply proved by the *Atlantic* advertisement quoted above, its continuing popularity by the fact that the listing of subsequent editions occupies six pages in George B. Ives's bibliography of Holmes—there exists, for instance, a German translation with the compact title of *Der Tisch-Despot*. Of editions later than the first, the most important from the collector's standpoint is that of 1894 (not 1893, as in Ives), with illustrations by Howard Pyle, preferably in the large-paper format, of which two hundred and fifty copies were printed.

No Holmes bibliography seems ever to have listed the first English edition of *The Autocrat*, for the reason, perhaps, that that edition is as unfamiliar to bibliographers as to collectors generally. It is not enough to say that this edition is the scarcest of all the forms in which *The Autocrat* exists, since this state-

ment fails to accent the full measure of its elusiveness. The heretofore accepted first English (and first British) edition has been that issued in 1859 with the joint imprints of Alexander Strahan & Co. of Edinburgh and Hamilton, Adams & Co. of London. But the firm of Sampson Low, Son, & Co. had previously imported some sets of sheets—presumably not many—of the first American edition, and these were issued in London with a title-page dated 1858. The general clarity of the impression indicates that these sheets were among the earliest to come from the press.

The earliest Boston issue of *The Autocrat* belongs to the deceptive company of books which seem common but are not. This statement holds true even when due allowance is made for condition—and *The Autocrat*, for some reason, is much scarcer in good or fine condition than most of its great New England contemporaries of the 1850's and 1860's.

The Autocrat is, of course, the essential item among the books that comprise the Breakfast-Table series—including *The Autocrat* itself, *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* (1860), *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* (1872), and *Over the Teacups* (1891). Computing from the first of the two "Autocrat" papers in the *New England Magazine*, the series was spread over sixty years. Initiated when he was twenty-two, it was concluded when Holmes was eighty-two, three years before his death. "We have settled when old age begins," said the Professor. "Like all Nature's processes, it is gentle and gradual in its approaches, strewn with illusions, and all its little griefs soothed by natural sedatives. But the iron hand is not less irresistible because it wears the velvet glove. The button-wood throws off its bark in large flakes, which one may find lying at its foot, pushed out, and at last pushed off, by that tranquil movement from beneath, which is too slow to be seen, but too powerful to be arrested. One finds them always, but one rarely sees them fall. So it is our youth drops from us."

Little Women

NOT QUITE A MONTH after the Jacksonian democracy had been handsomely vindicated at the polls by the reëlection of its supreme exponent to the Presidency of the United States, Colonel Joseph May of Boston had a letter from his son-in-law, who was teaching school at Germantown, Pennsylvania. Two and a half years earlier the colonel's daughter Abigail had married Amos Bronson Alcott, who had laid at her feet a fine old New England ancestry and precious little else. Abigail could advance a claim or two herself in this regard, so that the colonel was at least able to console himself with the certainty that any offspring resulting from the union could assert a satisfactory pedigree even though they might be born with wooden spoons in their mouths.

It was thus, perhaps, that his thoughts ran as he scanned the letter from Germantown. It was dated November 29, 1832—Alcott's thirty-third birthday—and it announced the arrival, "at half-past 12 this morning," of a second daughter, "a very fine healthful child" whom Mrs. Alcott "inclines to call . . . *Louisa May*—a name to her full of every association connected with amiable benevolence and exalted worth. I hope its *present possessor* may rise to equal attainment, and deserve a place in the estimation of society."

If the colonel looked upon this sentiment as a piece of sheer impudence (there is no reason in the world to suppose that he did), then Destiny has properly rebuked him. For the colonel's highest claim to fame is the fact that he was the grandfather of Louisa May Alcott, and that her name enshrines his own—something that probably not one reader of her books in a thou-

sand ever appreciates. What a pity the colonel could not have been a Robinson or an Appleton or a Satterthwaite—or a Mays!

That Providence which watches over the pure in heart ruled the long years of Amos Bronson Alcott and brought down his gray hairs at the last in triumph to the grave. He was a philosopher in every sense of the word, including that popular sense which defines a man who never has a cent in his pockets and yet contrives to be happy and to impart that happiness to most of those about him, particularly his own family.

In his own day Alcott's educational theories were regarded (depending on the regarnder) as peculiar, advanced, odd, impracticable, epoch-making, nonsensical, or outrageous. In 1837, after he had been back in Boston three years and was conducting a school in the Masonic Temple, he issued the second volume of *Conversations With Children on the Gospels*, the first volume of which had appeared the preceding year under the editorship of Elizabeth Peabody, whose sister Sophia was soon to become Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne. In the second volume was published this radically frank utterance: "A mother suffers when she has a child. When she is going to have a child, she gives up her body to God, and he works upon it in a mysterious way, and with her aid, brings forth the Child's Spirit in a little Body of its own." This tenderly phrased essay in sex education was too much for that Boston which had not yet had an opportunity to voice its disapproval of *The Easiest Way* and *A Farewell to Arms*. Nor need Boston bear the obloquy alone. Across the Charles a Harvard professor divided the second volume of the *Conversations*, like all Gaul, into three parts, of which one-third was "absurd, one-third blasphemous and one-third obscene." Alcott's school went out of business, at severe financial hardship to himself, but it was a great victory for folks who knew all there was to know about everything. The next year found him at Concord, tenanting a cottage whose rental was fifty dollars a year.

Almost all of Louisa's schooling was from the lips of her father or his disciples, and she herself would become the finest

exemplar of the efficacy of his training. In Louisa Alcott's own diaries, extensive quotations from which are to be found in Ednah D. Cheney's *Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters and Journals*, first published in 1889 and still in print, there are striking little pictures of the early days. The girls (eventually there were four of them) offer an interesting parallel with the Brontës—a parallel which little Louisa could in some measure appreciate: "Read Charlotte Brontë's life. A very interesting, but sad one. So full of talent; and after working long, just as success, love, and happiness come, she dies. Wonder if I shall ever be famous for people to care to read my story and struggles. I can't be a C.B., but I may do a little something yet."

At all events the Alcott sisters thrived more lustily than the doomed trio of Hawthorne—a tribute, perhaps, to the ultra-strict vegetarian regimen prescribed by the philosopher. A daguerreotype showing Louisa in her twenties exhibits her as a robust creature who has fully lived up to the early parental judgment that she was "a very fine healthful child."

§2. The little Alcotts manifested at least one trait that had characterized the little Brontës. They wrote for their own amusement—verses, stories, tiny romances, plays. By the time she was sixteen Louisa had composed the stories that would appear in 1855 as *Flower Fables*—her first book. Although the profits to her were only thirty-two dollars, the publication of *Flower Fables* brought her a little periodical work, and by 1860 she was gracing the pages of the infant *Atlantic Monthly*.

Late in 1862, by which time the North found serious complications in the way of its avowed intention to hang Jeff Davis to a sour-apple tree, Louisa went to Georgetown to become a nurse in a Federal hospital. She was there six weeks, emerging a convalescent from typhoid fever, and the physical and emotional crisis of the experience was so great that she was quite as much a war casualty as many a tattered wreck of manhood to whom she ministered. Since her first duty on arising had been to "run through my ward and throw up the windows" it is perhaps remarkable that the general distress was not more acute.

"No competent head, male or female, to right matters," she wrote, "and a jumble of good, bad, and indifferent nurses, surgeons, and attendants, to complicate the chaos still more." In those days a Yankee soldier's troubles were only beginning when a Rebel ball felled him.

She had gone to Georgetown, she wrote, "as if I was the son of the house going to war." "As a child," writes Gamaliel Bradford, "she had more of the boy than of the girl about her, did not care for frills or flounces, did not care for dances or teas, liked fresh air and fresh thoughts and hearty quarrels and forgetful reconciliations." More and more she became the man of the house, so far, certainly, as she was its principal breadwinner. In January, 1864, she noted in her journal: "On looking over my accounts, I find I have earned by my *writing* alone nearly *six hundred dollars* since last January, and spent less than a hundred for myself." *Hospital Sketches* had appeared—vivid firsthand accounts of her Georgetown experiences based on her letters home. She noted "a request from Redpath to be allowed to print the sketches in a book. Roberts Bros. also asked, but I preferred the Redpath."

In 1864 appeared *Moods*, her first novel, cut down to single-volume length at Redpath's request—Louisa Alcott was always that publisher's ideal of an author: one who is amenable to suggestions. The following year she took advantage of an offer to go to Europe as companion to an aged invalid, placed *Moods* with Routledge in London, and in July, 1866, was home again and "soon fell to work on some stories." She was now in consistent demand, and in the fall of 1867 was asked to become editor of *Merry's Museum* and accepted. The salary was five hundred dollars a year, for which she must "read manuscript, write one story each month and an editorial."

Roberts Brothers, meanwhile, were not particularly put out by Louisa's choice of Redpath for the publisher of *Hospital Sketches*. In the same month which saw the offer of the editorship of *Merry's Museum* they suggested a girls' book to her, and nine months later, while preparing to bring out Bronson

Alcott's *Tablets*, they repeated the suggestions through him as intermediary. In May, 1868, when President Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial held the national stage, the diary records: "Father saw Mr. Niles of Roberts Bros. about a fairy book. Mr. N. wants a *girls' story*, and I begin 'Little Women.' Marmee [Mrs. Alcott], Anna and May all approve my plan. So I plod away, though I don't enjoy this sort of thing. Never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters; but our queer plays and experiences may prove interesting, though I doubt it." If this were the sole evidence of the autobiographical content of *Little Women* it would be sufficient.

Once committed to the task, she prosecuted it with exemplary speed. On July 15 she wrote, "Have finished 'Little Women' and sent it off—402 pages." The following month Roberts Brothers "made an offer for the story but at the same time advised me to keep the copyright; so I shall." It was one of the wisest literary decisions ever made. Commenting on this very passage herself seventeen years later, Louisa Alcott wrote: "An honest publisher and a lucky author, for the copyright made her fortune, and the 'dull book' was the first golden egg of the ugly duckling."

"Proof of the whole book came," she wrote on August 26. "It reads better than I expected. Not a bit sensational, but simple and true, for we really lived most of it; and if it succeeds that will be the reason of it. Mr. N. [Niles] likes it better now, and says some girls who have read the manuscript say it is 'splendid!' As it is for them, they are the best critics."

In September "Father's book came out. Very simple outside, wise and beautiful within." *Tablets* was, however, rather more elaborately invested than this description would indicate. It appeared in shiny brown cloth over beveled boards; its top edges were gilt and its other edges uncut in a day when these distinctions were uncommon. It was a much more pretentious affair, certainly, than *Little Women*, which soon afterward made its appearance—on October 30 she could write, "First edition gone and more called for."

That first edition was a performance of which one would know more than is ever likely to be knowable. The main problem concerns the illustrations rather than the text "Illustrated by May Alcott" (the "Amy" of *Little Women*), declares the title-page of the first edition; "With Illustrations," say subsequent title-pages. Whichever is said, there are four illustrations to be considered. Two of these—that facing page 116 and that facing page 320—are identical in A (first) and B (subsequent) editions. The frontispieces differ: in A the design shows all four girls grouped about Marmee (the caption for this illustration, assigned to page 12, is actually taken from page 18); in B it depicts Amy, Jo, and Laurie being received by Aunt March (the caption is taken from pages 262 and 263 and is assigned to page 262). In B an illustration faces page 139 which takes its caption from that page; in A an illustration faces 135 and takes its caption from that page, and this illustration is the crux of the business. It is most amateurishly executed—much more so than the other three illustrations in the first edition, which, while below rather than above the level of mediocrity, are clearly the work of a professional draftsman, however hackish and humble.

That May Alcott had her own emphatic doubts about her capabilities as an illustrator is evidenced by the following letter to her sister's publisher:

Mr. Niles

As my sister decidedly prefers the accompanying sketch to the Pickwick scene I have ventured putting it on the block, though the other would have been by far the most effective if I could have done it justice. This one certainly surpasses the former ones for utter flatness & my only hope is to do better on a fairy book, that kind of fanciful drawing being much more to my taste.

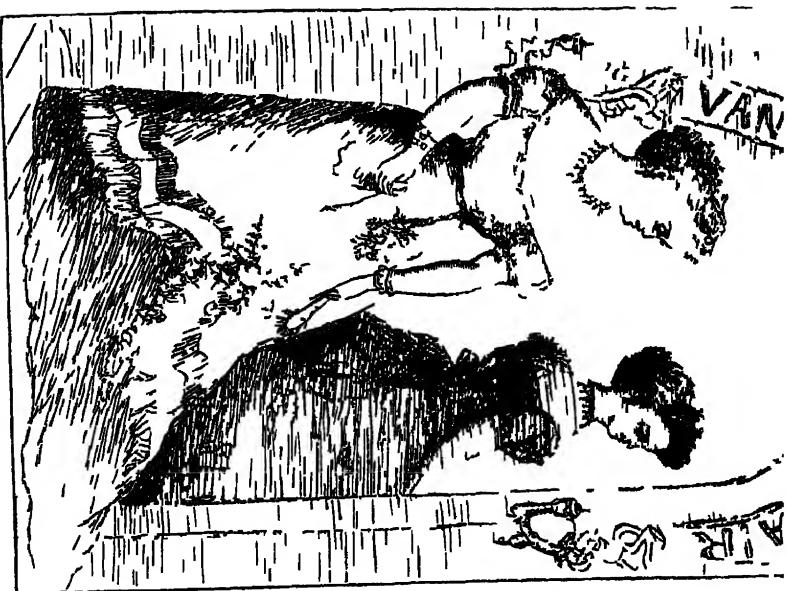
With many thanks for your kind consideration toward a beginner believe me

Yrs in haste

Concord July 26th '68

MAY ALCOTT

Is it reasonable to assume that the sketch here referred to is the one facing page 135, that it reached Niles too late for re-drawing and recutting, and that the other three drawings had



MAY ALLOTI IS COLLABORATOR

Two of the illustrations for sister Louisa's *Little Women* which were among those replaced after early printings

already been made over? At all events, *Little Women* did not come into its own as a picture book until 1880, when Roberts Brothers issued it in an elaborate quarto edition with more than two hundred drawings by Frank T. Merrill, a competent and adequate craftsman.

Merle Johnson has summarized sundry peculiarities which characterize the first edition of Part One. The most significant is that at the foot of page 341, the final text page, no notice appears that a second part is available—for the sound reason that no second part was available. Mr. Johnson added that “the first page of publisher’s advertisements which follows the last page of text in the 1868 edition is headed: Jean Ingelow’s Writings. / (rule) / Studies for Stories Comprising Five Stories, / (etc., etc., etc.). This first page of advertisements is numbered 3, the pages following are numbered 2, 11, 12, 8, 11, in the order given.”

§3. Mr. Niles was evidently something of the twentieth-century type of go-getter. He “wants a second volume for spring.” And on November 1 Louisa begins writing it. “I can do a chapter a day,” she declared, “and in a month I mean to be done.” She did not, however, quite live up to this exuberant promise. On the seventeenth she wrote: “Finished my thirteenth chapter”—four days behind schedule. The manuscript was ready on January 1.

The reception of the two parts of *Little Women* raised the Alcott family to a pitch of affluence they had never known before. The returns from these and the later books were meager enough by comparison with what such a successful author would reap today, but the stern lesson of frugality had been well taught and well learned. Amos Bronson Alcott enjoyed an ease which he deserved but of which he had never dreamed, and died in peace in his eighty-ninth year two days before his second daughter, the man of his house, who followed him in her fifty-sixth.

Louisa May Alcott has set down in clear terms, as follows, the extent to which *Little Women* is autobiographical.

"Facts in the stories that are true, though often changed as to time and place:—

"'Little Women'—The early plays and experiences; Beth's death; Jo's literary and Amy's artistic experience; Meg's happy home; John Brooke and his death; Demi's character. Mr. March did not go to the war, but Jo did. Mrs. March is all true, only not half good enough. Laurie is not an American boy, though every lad I ever knew claims the character. He was a Polish boy, met abroad in 1865. Mr. Lawrence is my grandfather, Colonel Joseph May. Aunt March is no one."

Jo, as everyone knows, was Louisa Alcott, and Amy was her sister May. May was to Louisa what Cassandra Austen was to Jane. She herself has been made the subject of a merited biography—Caroline Ticknor's *May Alcott: A Memoir* (1928). One incident in this pleasant tribute, too long to quote here, must at any rate be summarized. In 1876 May Alcott was on a train in England which stopped at a small station where "a fresh-faced English girl in a seal-skin jacket and jaunty hat" got in. The newcomer, to May Alcott's surprise, began to talk to her—"if history is to be believed the English nation are not given to much conversation with strangers." Soon the talk was of books as portrayals of national habits, and "Ah," said the young lady, "you are not any more familiar with English novels than we with your American ones, and just now our great delight is in a Miss Alcott, who writes the most charming books I have ever read. I have such a desire to take her by the hand and tell her how infinitely I admire 'Jo,' in 'Little Women,' and how eagerly we look for everything from her pen."

"Papa," it appeared, was "so carried away" with Miss Alcott's books "that at Christmas he bought many copies to give away as the most profitable and enjoyable present he could find."

Miss May listened to her raptures, and at last, greatly to the English girl's discomfort, disclosed her relationship to the author. But the English girl was soon as vivacious as ever, and as loud in her praise of *Little Women*.

This was incidence, but hardly coincidence. For by 1876 so

many editions of *Little Women* had appeared in England that the probabilities rather favored than opposed its familiarity to almost any fresh-faced English girl whom May Alcott might have met. It was available as a unit in many groups, among them the Lily Series, the Rose Library and the Daisy Books, and later in Warne's Star Series, the Endeavour Library, Chambers's Standard Authors, Blackie's School and Home Library, and in a collection of English [*sic*] Authors for School Reading. Part Two was issued under a variety of ingenious titles not of Louisa Alcott's choosing: *Nice Wives*, *Good Wives*, *Little Wives*, *Little Women Married*, and *Little Women Wedded*. An edition of Part One in French appeared in Paris as *Les Quatre Filles du Docteur Marsh—Petites Femmes* would hardly have suited. Altogether the ramifications of the English editions of *Little Women* are as tortuous as those of the English editions of Bret Harte. The problem deserves intensive study, and is hereby recommended to some amateur of bibliography who would be intimidated neither by its elaborate involvements nor by the expenditure of patience necessary to prosecute his search to completion—if completion be possible.

§4. *Little Women*, particularly Part One, is quite as rare in first edition as one might imagine from the fact that it was published a lifetime since and is a juvenile. The difficult situation is further complicated by the parts factor. In the preface to his facsimile edition of the 1769 edition of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (the Newbery abridgment "Adorned with Copper Plates"), which was his Christmas book for 1929, A. Edward Newton was beguiled into a typical and happy digression on this business of parts:

"There is this to be said for any book in two or more volumes. A book in one volume is a unit; wherever it is one has a book complete, whole and entire. Whoever finds one volume out of two or three finds vexation. He had all but better have found nothing. I once bought for two pounds one volume, in boards uncut, of the first edition of *Rasselas*; I would give two hundred for its better half.

“‘Little Women,’ that great American classic, ranking with ‘Alice in Wonderland,’ in two volumes, is worth any price the bookseller-crew cares to put upon it. I was routed out of bed one night not long ago to listen to a telegram read over the telephone from Carolyn Wells, who had discovered somewhere in the Middle West a fine copy of ‘Little Women.’ . . . She wanted to know should she buy it. I replied, ‘Yes, and be quick about it.’ And it was this same Carolyn who once called this noblest of games: ‘Book-collecting: The Idiot’s Delight.’ She knows better now and is trying to make up for lost time.”

In the collector’s behalf it can be advanced, of course, that *Little Women* is not a two-volume novel in the sense in which *Rasselas* or *The Spy* is a two-volume novel. Part Second (on page four of which, at the foot of the contents table, appears the notice “‘Little Women,’ Part First, is published in a volume uniform with this”) is something sufficient unto itself. But Part First is a much more desirable sufficiency, and Parts First and Second together are the ultimate sufficiency of all. He who acquires Part First, however, has won much more than half the battle.

Bacon's Essays

FRANCIS BACON, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, contrived to establish for his reputation the odd distinction of being the supremely unromantic figure of a romantic age. Drake, Sidney, Marlowe, Buckingham, Elizabeth, Essex, Raleigh, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Guy Fawkes, Izaak Walton, Captain John Smith (and, for that matter, Pocahontas), Galileo, Gustavus Adolphus, and Suleiman the Magnificent are on the glamorous roster of his contemporaries, but against the gorgeous background of his spacious day Bacon is subdued to inconspicuousness by the protective coloring of the astute and cautious politician.

He acted well his part, though there all the honor did not lie; he rose to be Lord Chancellor of England, and at the end, or very near the end, he fell into disgrace, convicted of bribery of the pettier order and conceding the justice of his conviction. Had he held to one of the lower levels of political preferment, instead of rising to a place second only to the king's own majesty, his would be merely the time-dulled story of the erring alderman caught with the boodle. A latter-day student of his career, Byron Steel, in *Sir Francis Bacon: The First Modern Mind* (1930), does not accept the rather commonly held view that his disgrace had a share in his demise. Bacon survived his humiliation five years; he died (it is the Baconian anecdote with which everyone is familiar) as the result of a chill contracted in stuffing the body of a fowl with snow.

It was a ridiculous exit, yet, its superficial absurdity aside, it fits the picture and somewhat pathetically dignifies it. "I have taken all knowledge to be my province," Bacon declared, not

at sixty-five on his deathbed, but at thirty-one. He held to his course, if not "beyond the utmost bound of human thought;" at least to the uttermost edge discernible in his day—and that, too, in every department of intellectual activity. Bacon's day was, perhaps, the latest moment in history when anything like omniscience was within the limits of human attainment; even in his day, Bacon's was, perhaps, the only mind which could achieve it. At least his was the only mind that did.

Francis Bacon (never "Lord Bacon") was a native Londoner, the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He was born in 1561, and so was "just two years younger than your Majesty's happy reign," as he took care to remind Elizabeth (at parental instigation, Mr. Steel surmises) on the occasion of a youthful visit to court. His upbringing was that of the well-to-do young gentleman of his day—four years of Cambridge and two years of Paris and the provinces in the entourage of the English ambassador to France.

He was recalled to England by the death of Sir Nicholas to find that his days of ease were over—at least until he should restore them by his own efforts. He was entered of Gray's Inn, studied law with not too severe application, and became one of the company of tiptoes on the fringe of the court circle. When he was about thirty he came to know the effulgent Essex, already a person of great moment at twenty-five, but even this powerful friendship, through no fault of Essex's, availed Bacon less than he hoped, and it was only by using his friend's prostrate body as a bridge to favor that Bacon finally came to sovereign notice. The fact that Bacon appeared as prosecutor when Essex faced trial first for disobedience and then for high treason has won him the deservedly adverse verdict of posterity. Francis Bacon himself, callous self-seeker that he was, finally felt the sting of reproach and attempted a defense of his behavior, putting the blame on Elizabeth, who then happened to be quite as dead as Essex.

"The life of Francis Bacon," declared Dean Church, "is one which it is a pain to write or to read." The record is available

in brief in his own study in the English Men of Letters Series and in Mr. Steel's monograph, among others, and, at vast extent, in the seven-volume biography of Professor Spedding, who did for Bacon what Professor Masson did for Milton, and who once remarked that whoever wrote Shakespeare, it was certainly not Bacon. Of Bacon the philosopher a compact summary is available in Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*. Bacon's first writing, as his last, was in the field of philosophic speculation. But it is not by the *Novum Organum* or *The Advancement of Learning* that his name has won a degree of familiarity that sets Bacon's among the great names of an epoch in which the standards of immortality were never so high.

§2. Bacon was thirty-six years old when there was issued, with the imprint of Humphrey Hooper, his *Essayes*, dedicated to his older brother Anthony, and published, the epistle dedicatory declared, "to prevent stealing;" "These fragments of my conceits were going to print," Bacon declared. "To labor the stay of them had been troublesome, and subject to interpretation; to let them pass had been to adventure the wrong they mought recive by untrue copies." The only adequate thing to be done, therefore, was "to publish them myself, as they passed long ago from my pen, without any further disgrace than the weakness of the author."

This allusion to an intended piracy is the sum of our exact knowledge that such an endeavor was being made. An almost exact parallel was provided a century and a half later by Gray's *Elegy*, the principal difference being that in Gray's case every essential detail of the story is known.

The first edition of the *Essayes* was by no means the book of that title which the world knows today. It contained only ten essays, and opened not with "Of Truth," but with "Of Studie;" which contains perhaps the best-known Baconian apothegm—certainly the best-known which the world inevitably associates with Bacon: "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."

The original edition of the *Essayes* has reached a pitch of

rarity enjoyed by few of the classics of English literature. By comparison First Folios of Shakespeare are, in a manner of speaking, as the sands of the sea. Of the original *Pilgrim's Progress*, which legitimately symbolizes rarity, more than twice as many copies survive as of the *Essayes*. Seymour de Ricci, in *The Book Collector's Guide* (1921), listed five known copies, plus a unique copy in twelvemo with the same date and imprint as the octavo edition. Of these six copies of 1597 date, one is in the British Museum, three are at Cambridge (including the twelvemo copy), one is in the Huntington Library, and one—the finest of all—in the library of the Elizabethan Club at Yale. England, therefore, owns just twice as many copies as America (proving that America does not enjoy a monopoly or even a majority of all rare books). All six copies, it will be noted, are in institutional collections.

The *Essayes* was reissued in 1598. Thereafter no new edition appeared until 1606, when a pirated issue was put out, to provide ultimate proof to posterity that nine years after its original publication a demand for the book existed which was impressive enough to warrant its larceny. There is a possibility that a pirated edition was also issued in 1604, but no copy is known to exist. The edition of 1612 contained thirty-eight essays—nine of the ten in the original edition and twenty-nine new ones—and so bulked nearly four times the size of the 1597 edition. Two known piracies of the same date prove that the fame of the *Essayes* was steadily growing, and added evidence was offered in 1618 and 1619 with the appearance of an Italian and a French translation, respectively.

The last edition to be published during Bacon's lifetime appeared in 1625, the year before his death. It included fifty-eight essays—half again as many as the edition of 1612, and nearly six times as many as the original edition of 1597. Yet the word content of the *Essayes* at its greatest extent is about half that of the average-length novel of today. The text and arrangement of the 1625 edition have been followed, without noteworthy exception, in every reprint that has since been issued.

The matter of the composition of the *Essayes* has been ignored in the present paper for the reason that the widely separated dates of the early editions and the steady increase in their bulk throw so much and such readily understandable light on the business. The essays were simply the distillation of a lifetime's wisdom by the wisest man of his day.

Bacon's *Essays* is of the company of books of which any early edition is a notable desideratum. The Huth copy of the first edition was sold at auction in London in 1911, and no copy has been offered at public sale since. At the same sale a copy of the 1598 issue changed hands, and this copy was destined to play a part in what A. Edward Newton calls "the most touching story in all the history of book-collecting." It was bought by a London bookseller for Harry Elkins Widener, and as Widener "dropped in to say good-bye," Mr. Newton relates at the very end of the *Amenities of Book-Collecting*, "and give his final instructions for the disposition of his purchases, he said: 'I think I'll take that little Bacon with me in my pocket, and if I am shipwrecked it will go with me.'" With his father and mother he sailed for America on the *Titanic*. Father and son were lost when the ship went down.

§3. In 1688—when the art of printing in British North America was less than half a century old, and the art of printing in Pennsylvania less than three years old—there appeared from the press of William Bradford of Philadelphia (the identical William Bradford who was to introduce type to New York five years later) the oddest compendium that had yet been issued over an American imprint. Its title is worth presentation in full: *The Temple of Wisdom. For the Little World, in Two Parts. The First Philosophically Divine, Treating of the Being of All Beeings, and Whence Everything Hath Its Original, as Heaven, Hell, Angels, Men and Devils, Earth, Stars and Elements. And Particularly of All Mysteries Concerning the Soul; and of Adam Before and After the Fall. Also, a Treatise of the Four Complexions, With the Causes of Spiritual Sadness, &c. To Which Is Added, a Postscript to All Students in Arts and Sciences.* (by

Jacob Boehme.) *The Second Part, Morally Divine, Contains First, Abuses Stript and Whipt, by Geo. Wither, With His Description of Fair Virtue, Secondly, a Collection of Divine Poems from Fr. Quarles. Lastly, Essayes and Religious Meditations of Sir Francis Bacon, Knight. Collected, published and intended for a General Good. By D.L.*

D.L. was Daniel Leeds, born in England in 1652, and, at the moment of the compilation of the queer jumble of mysticism and sagacity here outlined, one of the up-and-coming young men of the province of West Jersey. Leeds was one of the earliest compilers of almanacs in the Middle Colonies, and every student of early printing in America knows that if there had been fewer almanacs in the latter half of the seventeenth century the bibliography of that day would require the use of fewer brackets to denote the inferred existence of imprints now undiscoverable. Leeds became a rabid anti-Quaker, and the great bulk of his writing is aimed at that sect. Indeed, his antipathies and his almanacs kept him so busy that the only example of his editorial effort that does not fall into one of these two categories is *The Temple of Wisdom*, which miscellany was so widely, or at least industriously, read that it is to-day a scarcer book than even the original English edition of the *Essayes* of Francis Bacon.

Leeds's editorial alertness gave Bacon's *Essays* the distinction of being the second English classic to be issued over a New World imprint, yielding precedence only to the Boston edition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* of 1681. Shakespeare's self was forced to wait until 1795. Bacon did not write Shakespeare, but he saw America first.

Gulliver's Travels

THERE HAD BEEN a party of Boswell's assembling at the Crown and Anchor the previous evening—an evening probably in the late spring or early summer of 1768, a matter of weeks before George III issued orders to station four regiments of his troops in the intransigent town of Boston. A company of contemporary notables was in attendance, but “on the present occasion,” records Boswell, Dr. Johnson “had very little opportunity of hearing them talk, for with an excess of prudence, for which Johnson afterwards found fault with them, they hardly opened their lips, and that only to say something which they were certain would not expose them to the sword of Goliath; such was their anxiety for their fame when in the presence of Johnson.”

Boswell had met Johnson only a little more than five years earlier; he had not yet, perhaps, become the perfect amanuensis. “I am sorry to find that I have preserved but a small part of what passed,” he records of the evening at the Crown and Anchor—some of it, he admits, may have “escaped me in the noise of a numerous company,” so there was conversation, even if little of it was directed at Goliath. But he remembered enough to frame a general commentary on the Doctor's performance:

“When I called upon Dr. Johnson next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘we had good talk.’

“BOSWELL: ‘Yes, Sir; you tossed and gored several persons.’”

The Doctor may have smiled, and thought of Jonathan Swift, who, the night before, had come in for his share of tossing and goring. Swift, in his day, had been by way of a tosser and gorer

himself. He had lain these twenty-three years "where bitter wrath can tear the heart no more"—an epitaph of his own choosing. For he had eaten the bread of wrath (and the no more palatable bread of dependence) much of his days—days that eventually mounted to the impressive total of seventy-eight years. But the final years were a time of clouded mental anguish through which the sun of rationality shone cruelly betimes to illumine for Swift's own consciousness the terrible fact that, as he himself had prophesied to the poet Young, who found him on a walk "gazing upward at a noble elm, which in its uppermost branches was much decayed": "I shall be like that tree; I shall die at the top."

§2. It was more than ten years after the Crown and Anchor conversation that Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* appeared, with all its crystallized disparagement of Swift. "During his life," declared Johnson, "the place of his birth was undetermined. He was contented to be called an Irishman by the Irish; but would occasionally call himself an Englishman. The question may, without much regret, be left in the obscurity in which he delighted to involve it." This is a somewhat cavalier manner in which to ride over a tolerably important element in any man's biography. Happily, subsequent narrators of the story of Swift's career have investigated the business with more scholarly thoroughness. There is absolutely no mystery about the place of Swift's birth. His father, who had been Jonathan Swift before him, and born an Englishman, had migrated to Dublin early in 1666 to become steward of the King's Inns. In April, 1667, he died, and the following November his widow gave birth to his second child and only son, who could hardly be called other than Jonathan.

Swift received an excellent education, thanks to the good offices of an uncle who seems to have been at some pains to label his generosity. The youth barely made his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, but make it he did, and the authorities doubtless breathed easier thereafter. His college career had been a tumultuous affair, marked by frequent disciplinings—once

Swift and a group of other cutups had to ask public pardon of the dean on their knees. But his was not the viciousness of literal significance; as Sir Leslie Stephen declared in his fine study of Swift, "There is no trace of anything like licentious behavior in his whole career." The statement is worth remembering when one considers the stories of Stella and Vanessa, whose very names impart a glamour of romance to the chronicle of Swift's troublous career—a career that, while of significant interest to the pathologist and the psychoanalyst, offers nothing to the devotee of boudoir memoirs.

There was an influential relative besides the palpably generous uncle. The name of Sir William Temple would loom larger in the history of his time if he had not been a person of such intellectual dignity that the clumsy craftiness of contemporary politics, both internal and international, bred in him a contempt that kept him aloof from the more strident manifestations of statesmanship. He played a part, and a notable one, but it was backstage. He bound Holland and Sweden into an alliance with England against Spain, and he found a wife for William of Orange. More important, however, he engaged Jonathan Swift as his secretary. Swift was not particularly happy about it, and soon afterward returned to Ireland, was ordained, and spent a few months as a rural clergyman. But the new life was even more distasteful than his dependent position with Sir William Temple; he soon rejoined Temple, and remained with him until the latter's death in 1699. He returned again to Ireland to be a churchman, not because he liked it especially, but because it was, after all, the only trade he knew. Saving the trade of writing.

For in a humble way he had already begun to test and prove his capacity for satire, the art of which he was to become the supreme exponent in his language. And not so humbly either, for two of these earliest pieces are to this day among the best known of his productions—the very best known save for the then still distant masterpiece that will preserve his name imperishably as long as love of a story endures. Those two early

efforts may survive principally as names, for their titles have an alliterative provocativeness that is familiar to a host of men and women who have never ventured beyond: *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*. Both these efforts, "challenges thrown down to pretentious pedantry," as Sir Leslie Stephen called them, can still be read for their narrative interest, but their appeal to the student must always be the fact that they were in a measure the mold for the literary *tours de force* of a generation later.

Swift's stay in Ireland was punctuated with frequent visits to London, some of them lengthy. He was fully informed on the politics of his day, and his biting pen was soon being wielded in the succession of noisy fracasés that were the outward manifestation of Whig and Tory enmity. His reward for his services came in 1713 with his selection as Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin. He was then forty-six years old. He was just short of sixty when the work appeared which was to pluck his name from the roster of eighteenth-century political pamphleteers and place it among the elect.

He had begun to write it many years before, not as something to be tossed off and hurled into the thick of just one more partisan scrimmage, but as a general, all-embracing satiric survey of mankind that could take much time in the making, since the attributes of the subject were proof against substantial alteration in the interim. He was the ideal man to do it; history does not record the name of a finer candidate for the high priesthood of misanthropy. In a famous and often-quoted letter to Pope, himself no dilettante of misanthropy, Swift wrote: "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth." The sentiment may enjoy fairly wide acceptance, but Swift is one of the few who have had the honesty to put it into words.

The book appeared on October 28, 1726, and the announcement of its publication in the *Daily Journal* stated that there were a few copies "printed on a Royal Paper," so that it was one of the first English classics to appear in a large-paper edition.

It was called by a name now used in full only by cataloguers, bibliographers, and librarians: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World . . . By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of several Ships*. The printer was Benjamin Motte, "at the Middle Temple-Gate in Fleet-street."

There is an abundance of testimony to the immediate success of *Gulliver's Travels*. Within two weeks of its appearance Dr. John Arbuthnot prophesied for it "as great a run as Bunyan." John Gay wrote Swift that "the whole impression sold in a week." One of the host of pamphlets that sprang into being in the wake of the book declared of the first edition, "The town are infinitely more eager after them than they were after Robinson Crusoe." Another pamphlet, *Gulliver Decypher'd*—itself, like *Gulliver*, the work of an unnamed hand—declared: "If our Judgment of Books was to be determin'd by their Success, *Gulliver's Travels* is certainly the best Piece that ever was written, except *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Seven Champions*, *Jack the Giant-killer*, and a few more: For 'tis very remarkable, that there have been several Thousands sold in a Week; and it is already translated into the *French* language, in which, we are told, *Robinson Crusoe* has been very successful. But 'tis well known, that Milton went off, at first, very slowly; that Dean *Prideaux* could hardly get a purchaser for his *Connection*, &c., and that a famous Printer was lately undone by the *Bible*." But the praise carried a sting in its tail: "The Reason of this is, that there are more Fools than people of Judgment in the World!"

It is worth noting that of these commentators two compared the *Travels* with *Pilgrim's Progress* and two with *Robinson Crusoe*. Not only were the books comparable as interesting and exciting narratives, but their publishing adventures appear to have been almost exactly alike. Each was followed by imitations, adaptations, abridgments, alleged continuations by the same hand, burlesques, and piracies. Each has endeared itself in the generations following its original appearance to a succession of illustrators—*Gulliver* in particular, offering as it does such a rare opportunity for the delineation of the fantastic.

The bibliography of *Gulliver's Travels* is as labyrinthine an affair as that of *Robinson Crusoe*. There is no space here to set forth its intricacies; the student will find them recited in detail in Lucius L. Hubbard's *Contributions Towards a Bibliography of Gulliver's Travels to Establish the Number and Order of Issue of the Motte Editions of 1726 and 1727* (Chicago, 1922) and in the extensive data available in the bicentennial edition of *Gulliver* issued by the First Edition Club of London in 1926, with notes by Harold Williams—one of the most satisfactory reissues, for the purposes of reader and scholar alike, ever made of an English classic. An important element in the problem is the frontispiece portrait—not of Swift, obviously, since the book was anonymous (as were all of Swift's multitudinous productions save for one or two unimportant pamphlets), but of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, depicting him at the age of fifty-eight. In the first state the border of the oval medallion portrait is bare of lettering, the legend appearing in a narrow tablet below the oval. In the second state the descriptive matter is transferred to the border of the oval, and in the tablet below appears a quotation from Persius. In the third state the lettering is the same as that of the second, but the plate has been retouched. It is interesting to note that in every known copy of the large-paper edition (one copy exists with marginal comments in Swift's hand) the portrait is in the first state.

Part of the difficulty in establishing the priority of one issue of *Gulliver* over another lies in the fact that Benjamin Motte, or rather his unnamed printer, did not do a particularly handsome job. But Motte or another did even worse than that. The text was certainly tinkered with, and Swift's subsequent allusion to the "mangled and murdered pages" of *Gulliver* went deeper than annoyance over occasional clumsy misprints. The textually most accurate *Gulliver* published during Swift's life, in fact, did not appear until 1735, with the imprint of George Faulkner of Dublin. This gloomiest of gloomy deans had to employ a home-town printer to get the best results.

§3. In his thirty-second year Swift had set down a set of rules

of conduct to be followed "when I come to be old." One of them read, "Not to be fond of children, or let them come near me hardly." This was, perhaps, only the familiar phenomenon of overprotestation—Swift's bark was probably worse than his bite. But whatever his sentiments toward children, whether his harsh assertion against their proximity be taken literally or with a copious dash of salt, it would certainly astonish Swift out of all equanimity could he know that *Gulliver's Travels* is best known today as a children's book. The same has been said of Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe*, but Defoe at least was telling a simple story, despite one or two elaborate but unconvincing efforts that subsequent commentators have made to prove otherwise. A story by Swift was a coat of transparent veneer designed to bring out more clearly the grain of the satire beneath. Children, unless they be incredibly precocious, are blind to the clumsiest irony, and for two hundred years children have read *Gulliver* in blithe enjoyment of the adventures of its hero among the little and the big people and seen in it nothing but a strangely credible fairy tale.

But they have almost never traveled farther than to Lilliput and Brobdingnag. Part III, *A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbudrib, Luggnagg and Japan*, and Part IV, *A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*, are invariably omitted from juvenile versions, and are certainly less familiar to adults than are the continuations of *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*. In them, particularly in Part IV, Swift's cup of bitter disdain brimmed over. And he probably intended Houyhnhnms to be pronounced something like "whinnims."

Doubtless some time was essential in Swift's own century for the satire in *Gulliver's Travels* to evaporate and the story to emerge. This, at least, would help to explain why no edition appeared in America until 1793, not quite half a century after Swift's death, and sixty-seven tumultuous years after the publication of the original London edition. And when *Gulliver* did at last appear in America, it was unequivocally as a story—a story, moreover, for the tiniest among the newly established

citizenry: *The Adventures of Captain Gulliver, in a Voyage to the Islands of Lilliput, and Brobdingnag. Abridged from the Works of the Celebrated Dean Swift. Adorned with Cuts.* New-York: Printed and sold by W. Dunell, No. 19, Queen-Street. It is significant that *Robinson Crusoe* had been introduced to America in 1774 in similar guise, as an inconsequential chap-book—which must have sold by the hundreds and of which apparently only a single tattered copy survives today. The first American *Gulliver*, conceivably, may have been issued much earlier than 1793 and entire editions may have been read out of existence.

For during George Washington's Presidency there were no Jeremiahs to impress on naughty little girls and boys (or on their parents) the fate in store for such as did not tend their books as delicately as their consciences. Swift himself humorously envisaged a future for his works only in Duck Lane, the bourne of old books in the London of his day. Whatever fame he seriously foresaw or hoped for, the picture probably did not include in its details the plush draperies of the modern auction room and the battle of the book collectors.

The Decline and Fall

OF THE MAKING of a single book there is often no end; the marvel is, indeed, that fewer authors do not pass—like Dickens, Thackeray, Meredith, Stevenson—leaving bulky fragments behind them. The explanation may be that most of them do leave fragments, and that only when the writer is a Dickens or a Thackeray or a Meredith or a Stevenson is it worth while to publish his last bequest to posterity in the guise of a broken column. And when a writer embarks on an enterprise of such panoramic scope that its completion must inevitably be the business of years, then obviously the chances of his being forced to yield his pen long before he has written *finis* are vastly heightened.

Precisely this consideration must have occurred many times to Edward Gibbon between October 15, 1764, and June 27, 1787. It was on the former date, when, midway in his twenty-eighth year, he was visiting Rome for the first and last time, "as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." The project had not been immediately embarked on; "my original plan was circumscribed to the decay of the city rather than of the empire; and, though my reading and reflections began to point towards that object, some years elapsed, and several avocations intervened, before I was seriously engaged in the execution of that laborious work."

Eight years were to pass before the seed thus sown took root, fifteen more thereafter before "the hour of my final deliverance" in the quiet refuge of Lausanne. Gibbon fixed the occa-

sion in remembered words—words probably better known than any passage of equal (or longer or shorter) length in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

“It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.”

The whole span of his acquaintance with this “old and agreeable companion,” from the inception of the idea to the walk in the moonlight under the acacias, had embraced nearly twenty-three years. At its beginning England had just set the definitive seal of her supremacy on the New World—woe to France; at its conclusion the Constitution of the United States was being drafted. At its beginning Louis XV had just lost an empire in India; at its conclusion Louis XVI, his monarchy bankrupt, was preparing to lose a kingdom in France, and his head with it. At its beginning the first Pitt had fallen; at its conclusion the second Pitt was in the full tide of his beneficent might. At its beginning Gray, Smollett, Sterne, and Goldsmith still lived; at its conclusion Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott were at the edge of manhood, Lamb and Landor were boys of twelve, and Byron was waiting, with conjecturable impatience, to be born.

§2. Edward Gibbon was the oldest of seven children, and the only one to survive infancy. The marvel is that the first-born of Edward Gibbon the Elder and his wife Judith Porten did not precede, or at best soon follow, the rest of their pitiful



EDWARD GIBBON, HISTORIAN

From the engraving which served as frontispiece to the second volume of the first edition of *The Decline and Fall*

progeny. For "so feeble was my constitution, so precarious my life, that in the baptism of my brothers my father's prudence successively repeated my Christian name of Edward, that, in case of the departure of the eldest son, this patronymic appellation might be still perpetuated in the family."

Gibbon's early intellectual rearing, thanks to his frailness and to other considerations, such (quite credibly) as the fact that "my mother's attention was somewhat diverted by her frequent pregnancies," was also a precarious affair. Luckily his father was a person of some means; he was able, when Edward was fourteen, to install him as a gentleman commoner at Oxford, where he remained little more than a year, to emerge a Roman Catholic. Thereupon the father, shocked into decisive action perhaps for the only time in his lackadaisical career, sent the youth posthaste to Lausanne to sit at the feet of a Calvinist minister. M. Pavillard's task was a dual one—to instruct and to proselytize. In this effort to bring down one bird with two stones M. Pavillard aimed his second missile with the more particular care; by the end of 1754 his charge was "acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants."

M. Pavillard meanwhile had not wholly neglected Gibbon's intellectual deficiencies; but one can go little beyond this negative indorsement. "There is no evidence," declares James Cotter Morison in his study of Gibbon, that Pavillard "was a ripe or even a fair scholar, and the plain fact is that Gibbon belongs to the honorable band of self-taught men."

Virtually abandoned to his own devices except for the forced nurture of his immortal soul, Gibbon laid out for himself such a program of mental discipline as M. Pavillard would probably never have dared formulate for him. He began the study of the Latin classics, reading them intensively and in "chronological series from the days of Plautus and Sallust to the decline of the language and empire of Rome." The better to read Latin, he wrote it, and wrote it after an ingenious method: "I translated an epistle of Cicero into French, and after throwing it aside till

the words and phrases were obliterated from my memory, I retranslated my French into such Latin as I could find, and then compared each sentence of my imperfect version with the ease, the grace, the propriety of the Roman orator." French, indeed, from the mere fact of habitual association with it, was becoming his language; the contact colored his mode of expression, his mode of thought, his mode of life. He became a citizen of the world in a day when few such certificates of naturalization were being requested or issued.

And he fell in love. Since Gibbon lived and died a bachelor, since his personality is superficially among the least colorful in the chronicle of English letters, rather more has been made of this solitary romantic interlude than it deserves. The episode concluded on a highly unromantic note. Gibbon's father disapproved the contemplated match with Mademoiselle Curchod, and Gibbon, whose attachment could hardly have been desperate, obeyed orders. Nor does the lady appear thereby to have been reduced to a state of irremediable woe (though there is no question that her own emotions were profoundly and sincerely stirred), for subsequently she married somebody else.

In the spring of 1758 Gibbon returned to England after five years of Lausanne. The Seven Years' War was on, involving virtually every nation in Europe, its theater spread over three continents. Gibbon's share in this epochal cataclysm was inconspicuous—only, perhaps, because its fortunes kept him on home soil. In 1760 he became a captain in the Hampshire Grenadiers; and though his regiment never left England, the drill field and a highly convivial mess put as effective an end to studies as if he had been in action on the Continent. But the service itself was a school, and one that held Gibbon's interest—no historian is harmed by an inside, if theoretical, acquaintance with the science of war. Gibbon himself paid due tribute to the value of his military training:

"My principal obligation to the militia was its making me an Englishman and a soldier. After my foreign education, with my reserved temper, I should long have continued a stranger

in my native country, had I not been shaken in this various scene of new faces and new friends; had not experience forced me to feel the characters of our leading men, the state of parties, the forms of office, the operations of our civil and military system. . . . The discipline and evolution of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion, and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers (the reader may smile) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire."

But before his son was thus effectively re-Anglicized, the father had sought to speed the process by attempting to persuade him to enter Parliament. It would cost perhaps fifteen hundred pounds, which sum the elder Gibbon was willing to provide. But the son had other ideas. He embodied them in a long letter to his father that is a pleasant compound of affection, loyalty, and willfulness:

"An address in writing from a person who has the pleasure of being with you every day may appear singular. However[,] I have preferred this method, as upon paper I can speak without a blush and be heard without interruption. If my letter displeases you, impute it, dear sir, to yourself. You have treated me, not like a son, but like a friend. Can you be surprised that I should communicate to a friend all my thoughts and all my desires?" He was grateful for the offer of a seat in Parliament, but the prescribed talents "had not fallen to my lot." He was no orator; he lacked "necessary prejudices of party and of nation." And "with our private fortune, is it worth while to purchase at so high a rate a title honorable in itself, but which I must share with every fellow that can lay out 1500 pounds?"

The purpose of the letter was to offer an alternative suggestion—that the specified sum be employed "not in making me great, but in rendering me happy." And so to the nub of the business:

"The unhappy war which now desolates Europe will oblige me to defer seeing France till a peace. But that reason can have no influence on Italy, a country which every scholar must long to see. Should you grant my request, and not disapprove of my

manner of employing your bounty, I would leave England this autumn and pass the winter at Lausanne with M. de Voltaire and my old friends. In the spring I would cross the Alps, and after some stay in Italy, as the war must then be terminated, return home through France."

Gibbon *père* was willing. And so a month after the demobilization of his grenadiers Gibbon was on the Continent as a sort of precursor-beneficiary of the Guggenheim Foundation. He dallied in France and Switzerland, read Latin, grew so aware of Italy that when he finally set foot on her soil, in the spring of 1764, he knew the country, literally, like a book. It was six months later that he heard the friars singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter.

In the middle of 1765 he was back in London, but not to begin the writing of his magnum opus. His father's affairs were in a tangle which was hardly straightened out at his death in 1770. Gibbon lived the life of the mildly hospitable bachelor; "I sometimes give the prettiest little dinner in the world," and he did not disdain "the innocent amusement of a game at cards." There were one or two literary ventures of no surpassing moment; there was much study. In 1772 he definitely embarked on the composition of the *Decline and Fall*. The writing of the first volume required three years; it was published in February, 1776. The story of the publication of the book and of its instant success had best be told in Gibbon's own words, as set down in the autobiography which has already been heavily drawn on in the present paper:

"I agreed upon easy terms with Mr. Thomas Cadell, a respectable bookseller, and Mr. William Strahan, an eminent printer; and they undertook the care and risk of the publication, which derived more credit from the name of the shop than from that of the author. The last revisal of the proofs was submitted to my vigilance; and many blemishes of style, which had been invisible in the manuscript, were discovered and corrected in the printed sheet. So moderate were our hopes, that the original impression had been stinted to five hundred, till

the number was doubled by the prophetic taste of Mr. Strahan. During this awful interval I was neither elated by the ambition of fame nor depressed by the apprehension of contempt. . . .

"I am at a loss how to describe the success of the work, without betraying the vanity of the writer. The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; and the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin. My book was on every table, and almost on every toilette; the historian was crowned by the taste or fashion of the day."

Few are the books, great or small, whose original publishing history is so minutely available, particularly in the words of the author himself, and even more particularly with such commendable detachment in the author's recital. As Gibbon graciously notes, he had the benefit of a powerful imprint. The economic details of the transaction are also available in the form of a statement from the publishers to the author dated April 30, 1777 (fourteen months after the appearance of the first edition of the first volume). The document is worth presenting in itemized detail. The printing cost was one pound six shillings per sheet, including "notes at the bottom of the page," a total of £117; paper came to £171; the "corrector," for "extra care," received five guineas; advertisements and incidentals brought the total up to £310. Deducting this figure from receipts of £800 (one thousand books at sixteen shillings) left a profit of £490, of which two-thirds (£326 13s. 4d.) was paid over to Gibbon and the other third (£163 6s. 8d.) remained with Messrs. Strahan and Cadell.

Volumes II and III did not appear until 1781. Much of the interval is accounted for by the magnitude of the subject, some by the fact that Gibbon was now a Member of Parliament. His record as a legislator was not especially distinguished, but at least the affairs of England took up a quantity of his time that would otherwise have been devoted to the affairs of Rome. In September, 1783, he returned to Lausanne, and for four years toiled on the three final volumes of the *Decline and Fall*. He

wrote the concluding words, as has been noted, on June 27, 1787. A month later he was on his way to England with his manuscript, and the three final volumes were issued in May, 1788. Their bulk considered, the printing and publication of these three volumes must rank as a feat that reflects an abundance of credit on the skill and acumen of Thomas Cadell (for Strahan had been dead three years). Gibbon went again to Lausanne, and shortly afterward returned to London, a sick man. Death took him in January, 1794, in his fifty-seventh year. "There is hardly a parallel case in literature," says Morison, "of the great powers of a whole life being so concentrated on one supreme and magnificent effort."

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire shares that degree of scarcity which is common to serial works—particularly to serial works whose publication is spread over twelve years. The first volume is inevitably the least common of the six, and sets in which all the members save Volume I are of the first edition are frequently met with. The complete work in first edition approaches rarity only in the original boards and in uncut state. *The Decline and Fall* fell obviously in that classification of books which would be absorbed by the best people of its day, who, manifesting a contemptuous disregard for the feelings of a collecting posterity, with few exceptions had their copies handsomely arrayed in calf.

§3. Much was made, a few years since, of Champion Gene Tunney's literacy (though sometime earlier, on a visit to Jack Dempsey's training quarters, Heywood Broun had come upon a copy of William Le Queux's *The Czar's Spy*). Tunney was both amused and annoyed at the patronizing implication that the only use to which a prizefighter should put his head was to stop punches with it. The story quickly went to extremes, and had its hero familiar with all the most esoteric and recondite departments of literature from the *Chhattra-Prakds* to Gertude Stein. Discussing "What People Want to Know About Me" in *The American Legion Monthly* for March, 1927, Legionnaire Tunney brought the business down to earth.

"Being a boxer," he said, "my reading attracts attention. Some think I am highhatting the boys when I talk literature. I am not. I didn't begin the talk about books. Others did it to make conversation. Many put me through a cross-examination, a quiz to test my literary knowledge, as if I were an infant prodigy of eleven applying for admittance to college. In school I read books as part of the course in English, including several of Shakespeare's plays. When I went to work I continued my reading. I finished the works of Shakespeare from cover to cover in an old set. . . . By reading anthologies and collections, I became familiar with the works of many English, Irish and American poets. I have a good memory and had no difficulty in learning to recite many passages by heart. I have read considerable history. I struggled through Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'."

This last accomplishment suggested to *The American Legion Monthly* the idea of compiling a census of members of the organization who had read the *Decline and Fall* entire. In the course of several months the names of one hundred Legionnaires who had paralleled Tunney's feat were brought to light. There were men who had read Gibbon in Alaska, China, the Philippines, Rumania; there were five men who had read the *Decline and Fall* twice, two who had read it three times. Several had read it while convalescing from illnesses; one hospital orderly qualified, and also one doctor who had been given a set (possibly out of revenge) by a patient. One very enthusiastic Gibbonite recited the anticlimactic dénouement of a devout pilgrimage:

"While in London in 1925 I lived at the Adelphi Hotel, just off the Strand and but a few steps from the famous Adelphi Terrace, where John Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw and Sir James M. Barrie occupied apartments at the time. In a booklet on London I read that Gibbon wrote a great part of his immortal work in his quarters in the Adelphi Hotel. I hastened to ask the clerk if I might see Gibbon's rooms. The clerk assured me that nobody named Gibbon was stopping at the hotel. 'This

man is dead,' I explained. 'He was a great historian, and I understand he lived here at one time!' 'Not since I've been employed here, sir,' responded the polite clerk."

The ratio of rather more than one Gibbon reader to every ten thousand members speaks well for the Legion; it is doubtful if so high a percentage would result from a survey of the general population. The *Monthly's* enterprise, however, involved a scandalous state of affairs which was disclosed by the much-seeing eye of Alexander Woollcott in *The New Yorker*:

"A campaign has been waged by *The American Legion Monthly* in a puzzling effort to persuade the veterans to read Gibbon's 'The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' It began with a hearty and signed endorsement of the presumably gratified opus by that muscular bookworm, Mr. Tunney, and after two years of unremitting propaganda, the enrollment of ex-warriors who either had already read it or have since read it has risen to ninety. It has been an uphill fight, made all the more difficult by the indignant and sometimes profane letters from Legionnaires long since wearied of the topic. The feeling will run high at the next convention, if the secret ever gets loose among the delegates that the editor of their *Monthly*, who has so ably directed the campaign, has not himself gone so far as to read a single page of Gibbon."

§4. Gibbon's fame had to wait only a comparatively short time before receiving whatever addendum was implicit in the issuance of an American edition. The first American edition appeared at Philadelphia in eight volumes in 1804-05, sixteen years after the publication of the last three volumes of the original English edition and ten years after Gibbon's death, bearing the imprint of William Y. Birch and Abraham Small. It contains nothing of American interest beyond the imprint—no publisher's announcement, no special foreword—, in which respect it would be exactly paralleled by the first American edition of Pepys's *Memoirs* a half-century later. In one respect, however, it was a distinct improvement over the first English edition. Messrs. Birch and Small offered their edition in handy

octavos; the first English edition was in impressive but inconvenient quarto volumes that looked well on shelf or table but fitted the lap comfortably only by comparison with either volume of Johnson's *Dictionary*—also from the press of “Mr. William Strahan, an eminent printer.”

The Essays of Elia

IT WAS, DOUBTLESS, with a certain sense of satisfaction, and, even more, with the assured consciousness of having put a capstone on the modest edifice of his literary career, that Charles Lamb inspected the two volumes of his collected *Works* when they appeared at London with the imprint of C. and J. Ollier in the early summer of 1818. He was forty-three years old, and twenty-six of those years he had devoted to the service of the East India Company—not in glamorous overseas enterprises, but as a drudge bent over a desk behind the stately Ionic portico of East India House in Leadenhall Street. There was a pension in the offing—it was seven years distant, to be exact, yet close enough to be included in the personal stocktaking which must have followed the appearance of the *Works*.

The fact that the *Works* bore the Ollier imprint was not in itself proof that they would be avidly sought out by the book-buying public. Only the year before this the Olliers had issued a book of poems by a youthful but nevertheless retired hospital apprentice named John Keats which had been a pretty handsome failure. It is not likely, however, that Mr. Lamb looked for anything sensational in the way of a sale. He wrote the Olliers as much, adding, however, that the books did seem "admirably adapted for giving away." In this manner he disposed of more than thirty copies on publication, thus easily becoming his own best customer. At least once he asked his publishers to "be kind enough simply to write 'from the Author'" in each of a specified number of copies. This was a reasonably common practice of the time, and one which has since caused a considerable amount of distress to booksellers and collectors.

The Works of Charles Lamb contained two or three plays, a short novel, a few poems, some dramatic criticism, and several essays that had originally appeared in a quarterly review called the *Reflector*, which, through no fault of Lamb's, died after four numbers. The two volumes of the *Works*, despite the somewhat miscellaneous character of their contents, were well received in a day when a good deal of literary criticism was written with bludgeons. Yes, Mr. Lamb might look forward to going down with the ship of letters with colors flying.

§2. Mr. Lamb was a bachelor, more by force of circumstance than by natural predilection, and lived quietly (save when gin and water urged him to outbursts of conviviality) with his sister Mary in lodgings in Great Russell Street, Covent Garden, at the corner of that Bow Street which is as famous in the annals of crime as Scotland Yard itself. Mary was ten years older than Charles, the second of seven children of whom Charles was the youngest. Four had died in infancy; only Mary, Charles, and brother John survived. Their father had been confidential clerk to Samuel Salt, their mother Mr. Salt's housekeeper, and it was through quiet, kindly Mr. Salt that Charles had gained his own clerkship at East India House, which position, owing to the father's growing infirmities, made Charles the main support of the family at seventeen. The burden fell even more heavily on Mary, who was in virtual charge of the household.

In the early fall of 1796, when Lamb was twenty-one, entered tragedy. Mary Lamb, in a sudden seizure of insanity, stabbed her mother to the heart with a table knife. Some months of restraint intervened, and the elder Lamb himself had died, before Mary was turned over to the care of Charles. The shadow never utterly passed; its hovering proximity set the final seal of tenderness on the devoted care of the little brother for the big sister—the sister who had held his tiny hand as he took his first tottering steps abroad into his ever fascinating and ever beloved London.

With Mary he had written, in the years of this compassionate custodianship, various trifles for children, and, in addition,

something for children that was rather more than a trifle: *Tales from Shakespeare Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. These pleasant collaborations had done their share in holding off the shadow; so had the frequent and delightful presence of one or many of their friends. A roster of the Lambs' friendships is almost an inclusive list of contemporary literary notables.

A year and a half after the appearance of the two-volume *Works* the *London Magazine* came into being with John Scott as editor. Scott possessed the supreme qualifications of editorship—the ability to know what he wanted and the ability to get it. Unfortunately, he became involved in a professional quarrel with John Gibson Lockhart which reached a crisis in the latter's challenging him to a duel. Somehow the affair became transferred to Lockhart's second, Jonathan Henry Christie; Scott and Christie met, and Scott received wounds of which he died a few days later—in the thirty-eighth year of his life, and the second of his editorship of the *London Magazine*. Thomas Hood was called to fill his chair.

So passed the brilliant Scott, but not before he had, directly or indirectly, performed a noble service to letters. The precise machinery of this performance is not known—even so thorough a biographer as E. V. Lucas was unable to record the precise steps whereby the important association was effected. Lamb, as Mr. Lucas points out, had written for the *Champion* when Scott was connected with it, but Thomas Noon Talfourd, Mr. Lucas notes, credited William Hazlitt with establishing Lamb as a *London* contributor. At any rate, Hazlitt could hardly have engineered the connection unless Scott had been available to engineer it with; wherefore, to whomsoever the credit is due, let Scott's name be close to the head of the list.

Even so, the *London Magazine* had been flourishing for several months before Charles Lamb became numbered among its contributors, and then under another name than his own. The August, 1820, issue of the *London* contained an essay called "Recollections of the South-Sea House" and signed Elia. Lamb's South-Sea House days had preceded his affiliation with

East India House; they had, in fact, covered only a few months of his later boyhood. It is, as Mr. Lucas notes, "probably unique for a man who all his life had meant to be a writer not to find himself until he was forty-five, and then to do so with material fetched from his teens."

The signature of Elia meant, to everyone except Lamb, precisely nothing. It was the name of an Italian fellow clerk of South-Sea House days who "himself added the function of an author to that of a scrivener, like myself," Lamb later explained. Beyond this, little enough is known of the real Elia, save for a melancholy allusion in a letter of Lamb's written in the summer of 1821: "I went the other day (not having seen him for a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago." Lamb, Mr. Lucas discloses, once noted the fact that "Elia" was an anagram of "a lie," and the pseudonym may well have been chosen for this innocent reason.

In adopting it, Lamb added an important unit to the world's store of mispronounced words. There are hundreds—well, dozens, at any rate—of intelligent men and women who know how to pronounce sacrilegious, pariah, eczema, and oleomargarine who nevertheless pronounce Elia as if it rhymed with the name of Hamlet's unfortunate fiancée. Lamb intended it to be called Ellia, but the misconception was common in his own day, and has had little difficulty in surviving into this.

§3. The Elia papers appeared in every number of the *London Magazine* throughout its career—at least one to an issue, sometimes more. After the death of Scott the *London* passed to the hands of Taylor & Hessey, who mismanaged it with not too severe precipitancy; it survived their acquisition for five years—thousands of periodicals have fared worse.

In 1822 Lamb's contributions were collected and issued under the title *Elia. Essays Which Have Appeared Under That Signature in the London Magazine*, and above the imprint of Taylor & Hessey. The title-page was dated 1823, but the book

was probably available to such a public as awaited it sometime before the end of 1822—the New York Public Library copy contains a presentation inscription (not by Lamb) dated January 1, 1823. Since this copy is forever removed from the tumult of the market, and since, therefore, it is both valueless and invaluable (in the sense that it is the property of the poorest resident of New York, and that the richest resident could not buy it), the fact that the inscription is that of a casual purchaser is of more bibliographic interest than if it were in the author's own hand. The author could readily obtain copies in advance of publication date, but a lay donor would not be likely to have an opportunity to acquire one before the book was displayed in the shops. It exists in two states, in the first of which the publishers' address is given simply as Fleet Street, and in the second as 93 Fleet Street and 13 Waterloo Place, Waterloo Place being a more recent topographical designation in London than Pershing Square is in New York now.

§3. Ten years were to elapse before another group of papers—under the title *The Last Essays of Elia. Being a Sequel to Essays Published Under That Name*—appeared at London, with the imprint of Edward Moxon. John Taylor, of Taylor & Hessey, protested, presumably on the basis of a supposititious copyright claim inferred in the serialization of the essays in the *London*. The business came to law, and Moxon won. The affair is of particular interest for the reason that the incidental correspondence between Lamb and Moxon brought out the fact that the 1823 collection had netted Lamb thirty pounds—or would have if he had received it. For his contributions during the first two years the magazine itself paid him one hundred and seventy pounds.

Thirty pounds, even if Lamb had got it, is indication of no impressive sale. The essays, Mr. Lucas points out, "did not become popular in England until long after Lamb's death." America, however, paid him early tribute of adoption. His works appeared in 1828 in two volumes with a Philadelphia imprint, and the collection was—and still is—of considerable

importance by reason of the fact that it not only included the essays which had appeared in London in 1823, but also anticipated the London publication of the *Last Essays* by five years. The publishers were Carey, Lea and Carey. The title-page of the first series, apart from the imprint, was textually the same as that of the original London issue. The title-page of the later essays designated them as *Second Series*. It is worth noting that the printers of the first volume (the name appeared on the title-page below that of the publisher, a practice becoming less common at that date than it had been a generation earlier) were Mifflin and Parry, and of the *Second Series*, J. R. A. Skerrett.

Lamb, far from being annoyed by the piracy, was frankly pleased at the testimonial implicit in the publication. Within a few months of Lamb's death in 1834 he met Nathaniel Parker Willis (whom certain of Willis's own countrymen, unfeelingly and not too justly, were to christen "the dude poet of the Hudson"). Willis, describing the meeting in *Pencilings by the Way*, tells how he "mentioned my having bought a copy of 'Elia' the last day I was in America, to send as a parting gift to one of the most lovely and talented women in our country. 'What did you give for it?' said Lamb. 'About seven and sixpence.' 'Permit me to pay you that,' said he, and with the utmost earnestness he counted out the money upon the table." What has become of this vicarious presentation copy, and who was the "lovely and talented" lady?

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